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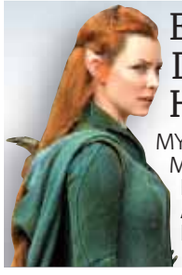

ELVES AND DRAGONS AND HOBBITS, OH MY

MYTHICAL CREATURES OF MIDDLE-EARTH RETURN FOR ANOTHER BIG-SCREEN ADVENTURE IN THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG

PAGES 25-27

Going from Heather to Lee

New documentary traces transgender man's transition while he teaches Toronto students

PAGE 7

Nyet so fast, says Putin

Russian president isn't going to let Canada expand its Arctic turf without a fight

PAGE 14

So, you thought you'd seen the last of me?

Leafs' Bernier and Kings' Scrivens set to face off against old teams

PAGE 47

NEWS WORTH SHARING.

Three OPG execs get the axe after scathing report

Review. Auditor general denounces generous salaries, benefits doled out by energy utility

Three highly paid executives at Ontario Power Generation have been fired after an explosive auditor general's report found the utility is rife with nepotism and pays out too much in wages and benefits.

In her annual review — that also blasted the Liberals over the massive backlog for autism treatment, among other transgressions — auditor general Bonnie Lysyk warned OPG's human-resources practices contribute to higher hydro bills.

Lysyk exposed "very generous" wages and benefits at the Crown agency, which led to the sacking of its chief financial officer, its executive vice-president of strategic initiatives and its internal audit vice-president.

"These findings are not acceptable," a grim-faced Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli said Tuesday after the auditor tabled her 444-page report.

"Ontarians can and should expect better," he fumed, noting OPG will cut expenses by $1 billion over five years, slash employees to 9,308 from 11,640 by 2016 and reduce bonuses by 10 per cent.

OPG chair Jake Epp said the executives were terminated "effective immediately," but would receive severance, which is still being negotiated.

The public utility refused to name the trio, but its website identifies two. They are CFO Donn Hanbidge, who earned $653,144 last year in addition to $4,515 in taxable benefits, and executive vice-president John Murphy, who made $687,708 plus $138,307 in taxable benefits.

Go to metronews.ca for the full story.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Nice work if you can get it

- The number of OPG employees making $50,000 a year in overtime has doubled — to 520 from 260 — in the past decade.
- One technician earned $211,000 last year, far more than his base pay. In another case, an employee transferring offices received $392,000 in moving allowances — after selling his old home for $354,000 and buying a new house for $1.35 million.

TEARS AND CELEBRATION

A boy with "Rest In Peace Nelson Mandela" painted on his face looks up to the skies during the memorial service for the former South African president at the FNB Stadium in Soweto, near Johannesburg, On Monday. More coverage, pages 8 & 10. PETER DEJONG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Light rail the right track

'No real benefits' in Scarborough subway: Report

The $2 billion Scarborough subway, which taxpayers in Toronto may spend the next 30 years paying for, has "no real benefits," says the author of a new independent analysis.

Instead, the Scarborough RT, the proposed Sheppard LRT and the Sheppard subway line should be combined into a single automated light-rail system, which, at an estimated $1.8 billion, would cost less than a subway and attract more riders, the report says.

"If I build a subway, I have to pay $2 to $3 billion, and I get nothing back for it. In fact, it'll cost more to run," said report author Michael Schabas, a partner at First Class Partnerships Limited, an international consulting firm.

Schabas scrutinized key projects in Metrolinx's Big Move transit plan, calculating their overall costs compared to their benefits. The report was funded by Toronto-based nonpartisan research group the Neptis Foundation.

The subway, which city council voted to support in October and the provincial and federal governments will help fund, is an extension of the Bloor-Danforth subway to Scarborough Centre.

But Schabas says the subway will only be about five minutes faster than the existing RT — mostly because of fewer stops — and is unlikely to attract many new riders because it offers little that is new.

TTC Chair Karen Stintz said she was not prepared to revisit the subway plan — fully funded by three levels of government — to consider the ALRT alternative. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Last call for all Santa-loving, gift-listing, been-nice passengers

Sonia Rassy takes a picture with Liyanna Khakoo, 4, during the 8th annual Children's Wish Foundation flight with Santa on Monday. This year's flight donated $309,605 to the Children's Wish Foundation. One hundred and five children with their families took flight on Air Transat Flight 884 to the North Pole to find Santa Claus.
STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Math doesn't add up, TDSB audit finds

Nearly $1.3M in unauthorized raises. Concerns about contracts, trustee conflicts also part of school-board report

An audit of the country's largest school board found $1.29 million in unauthorized raises for senior staff since 2010, as well as improper approval of contracts and payments to charities with clear links to trustees or employees.

In June, the province ordered a look at expenses, spending on programs and contracts over the past three years at the request of then acting director Donna Quan, who took the top job at the Toronto District School Board after Chris Spence resigned in disgrace.

Quan, now director, said the Ernst and Young report is a call to action and the board will work with the ministry of education to address all concerns.

"I want to say to you, we recognize clearly the need for higher levels of fiscal responsibility," she told reporters at board headquarters on Tuesday afternoon, just hours after the 54-page report was released.

"We know that our $3 billion budget is an important budget in terms of student achievement and well-being and every dollar we have must go into the classroom."

She said the board will come up with an action plan to address all 27 recommendations.

On the issue of raises for senior staff, Quan said the board will address that concern, although other boards also gave senior managers salary increases from 2010 on.

Quoted

"This is a turning point ... in the sense that we recognize that our dollars must be spent in a responsible manner." Donna Quan, TDSB acting director

The pay raises for senior managers came amid a province-wide freeze on wages for all public-sector workers. Quan said the board consulted with boards and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education where the raises were deemed legitimate.

Quan went to the province earlier this year after board audit committee chair Trustee Elizabeth Moyer identified several areas of concern — many of them shared by auditors.

(Moyer later found herself accused of sexually harassing a senior staffer, which she said was in retaliation for being a whistleblower; Quan said Tuesday that an investigation is ongoing.)

The audit also raises the issue of a "culture of fear" about speaking up when problems arise — something the board has been accused of previously.

The audit also found that charities and not-for-profits receiving money from the board had links to trustees or employees or their family — but records show no conflict-of-interest declarations were ever made. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Da Mao eats bamboo at the Toronto Zoo. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Eats shoots, and profits

Da Mao and Er Shun are turning out to be worth their weight in bamboo.

The two giant pandas, on loan from China for five years at the Toronto Zoo, arrived in May. The zoo pays $1 million annually to a Chinese conservation fund to keep the pandas, and the 100-kilogram bears are provided up to 450 kilograms of imported bamboo twice a week at a cost of $200,000 per year, said spokeswoman Jennifer Tracey.

But they are proving hugely popular, according to an attendance and revenue report presented on Dec. 5.

Between the pandas' arrival on May 17 and Oct. 31, attendance went up 31.4 per cent, with 252,447 more guests than during the same period in 2012. And the zoo is ahead of their year-to-date budgeted revenue by $1.5 million. For the period between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31, the zoo is 8 per cent behind its attendance target. The report indicates that gap is partly a result of a delay that saw the panda exhibit open in mid-May rather than April.

Retail sales, however, are $690,800 ahead of budget due to the popularity of "panda plush," said Tracey. "Revenues are through the roof, which is great because we're a not-for-profit. It goes back into operations and it enables us to do a lot more for the species survival programs we've got."
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Mayor Rob Ford poses with kids at the Etobicoke Lakeshore Santa Parade on the weekend. A Toronto firm has started a site that allows those unhappy with the mayor to drop a piece of coal into his virtual stocking. COLIN MCCONNELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

What to get that certain special mayor in your life

Online initiative.
Like him or lump him, Rob Ford isn't going anywhere, so why not send him some coal?

CYNTHIA BIGRIGG
toronto@metronews.ca

Rob Ford has been a naughty boy, and naughty boys get coal for Christmas.

This is the premise behind a website that surfaced on Monday — robfordcoal.com — created by Toronto-based company Bob's Your Uncle. The site allows users to drop a piece of coal into Rob Ford's virtual stocking with the simple click of a mouse.

"We created it because, I think like many citizens of Toronto, we're somewhat appalled at our current situation," said CEO Bob Froese, referring to the city's scandal-entrenched mayor. "We're exceedingly frustrated by our inability to do anything about it."

A company based on big ideas, Bob's Your Uncle put a plan in place to make its sentiments known and allow the public to do the same.

"We thought, you know, we can't do anything substantive to get him out, but at least we can do something that, in some small way, visibly expresses our dissatisfaction and allows other people to do the same thing."

As for the inspiration behind the site, Froese suggested it was Ford who gave them the idea.

"His behaviour is truly childish. And so, if you're a child, why don't we treat you like a child?"

The kicker? Bob's Your Uncle will be making a full delivery of coal to city hall on Dec. 20.

"It's impossible to say at this point what the counter is going to get to," said Froese, "but we have an active plan in place to certainly deliver coal. Santa is going to walk from our office to city hall to make the delivery in person."

In the spirit of the season, there is a more gentle side to the site. For every piece of coal up to 5,000 dropped into the stocking, one dollar will be donated to needy kids on Santa's "Nice List." The agency has opted not to reveal the name of the charity until Dec. 23 when the funds will be handed over.

All funds will come from Bob's Your Uncle Agency.

Quoted

"His behaviour is truly childish. And so, if you're a child, why don't we treat you like a child?"
Bob Froese, CEO of Bob's Your Uncle

Expansion

Porter forges ahead on airport plans

Porter Airlines CEO Robert Deluce is pushing full-speed ahead to win approval for island airport expansion plans despite a series of bumps in his path.

"We believe there is more than sufficient information for council to conditionally approve our proposal," said Deluce during a Tuesday speech at the Economic Club of Canada. The plan is subject to certification of Bombardier's new CSeries aircraft and Transport Canada's approval of a runway extension.

Deluce has been lobbying for swift approval of the airline's expansion plan to fly the CS100 jets from the airport, requiring the lifting of a jet ban, and a runway extension of as much as 200 metres at each end.

He had been expected to speak to the business audience just days before city council was to vote on the proposal, but the executive committee decided to defer a decision until the new year.

City staff are recommending a delay on a decision until March 2015, saying key information is not yet available. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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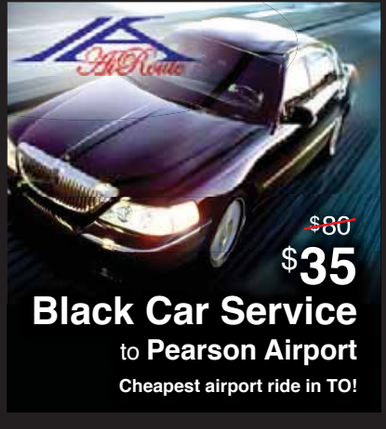

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Ford stands behind pedophile comment in Black interview

'I don't want to say the word, but ...' Shot at Toronto Star reporter has newspaper's lawyers pondering next step

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
jessica.smithcross@metronews.ca

Mayor Rob Ford said Tuesday he stands by "every word" he said in an interview with Conrad Black, despite causing an uproar by suggesting an award-winning journalist is a pedophile and opening himself up to potential litigation.

Ford's interview with Conrad Black aired Monday night.

Black had asked Ford to talk about "offensive events, abrasions, that have been perpetrated on you and your family by the media."

Ford replied, "The worst one was Daniel Dale in my backyard taking pictures. I have little kids. When a guy's taking pictures of little kids — haha — I don't want to say that word, but you start thinking, what's this guy all about? And I just lost it."

Ford said he then ran around his house to Dale.

"I caught this guy on the bricks over my fence taking pictures," he added. "He started screaming and yelling, dropped his camera, dropped his phone and everything."

Ford and Black then laughed about Dale fleeing. Answering a question from Black, Ford admitted Dale was not actually in his yard, but on public land.

Very little of Ford's story appears to be true. After the confrontation in May 2012, police investigated Dale at the mayor's request, which included watching CCTV video provided by the mayor and searching the BlackBerry Dale dropped when confronted. The police did not charge him with trespassing or voyeurism, and told him they had no evidence he had been on Ford's property or looked over his fence.

Dale has repeatedly maintained that he was on a parcel of public land outside of the mayor's fenced-off backyard because he was doing a story about how Ford was hoping to purchase land near his house. He did not have a camera with him, nor did he take any photos of the mayor's family or the mayor's yard.

"It's amazing. I don't know what to say about it," Dale told The Canadian Press in an interview. "In the calmest terms possible, it is unpleasant when the mayor of the biggest city in Canada essentially accuses you, or suggests, you are a pedophile."

He said the Star's lawyers are pondering the next steps.

Earlier in the day, Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly said Ford was "dead wrong."

Toronto Star editor Michael Cooke issued a statement: "Just when you think Mayor Ford has said the most stupid thing, such as letting the whole world know about his sex life at home, he tops himself with another outrage. Mr. Ford calling reporter Daniel Dale a pedophile tells you all you need to know about our mayor's brain. So sad for all of us."

Quoted

"It's almost beyond comment. It goes beyond the pale and I think there should be an apology for that." Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly

Conrad Black, left, interviews Mayor Rob Ford for his show on Vision TV. CONTRIBUTED

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Doc tells tale of teacher's gender transition

'It's just who I am'. Hicks believed to be the first trans teacher countrywide to transition while teaching

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
jessica.smithcross@metronews.ca

A screen grab from Both-And: The Lee Hicks Story, with Lee Hicks on left. CONTRIBUTED

Lee Hicks was teaching Grade six in Toronto, giving a lesson on puberty and gender. Coincidentally, he was just starting to go through puberty himself, when his students asked if he was transgendered.

"I had started testosterone about three days earlier, so I told them."

Hicks is the subject of Both-And: The Lee Hicks Story, a documentary about his transition from Heather to Lee, and how he shared it with his students at Palmerston Avenue Junior Public School three years ago.

Hicks and the director believe he was the first trans teacher in the country to transition while teaching, instead of taking a leave of absence.

Hicks said he had surgery to remove his breasts in the summer before and had students calling him "Lee." As he began taking testosterone midway through the school year he planned to tell the students about being trans when they asked.

Soon, he worked with director Azed Majeed, and filmed in the school for about eight days.

"The kids, the parents and the school were very supportive of the project," said Hicks.

Hicks describes Palmerston as a remarkable school where teachers were allies and the students were wonderful — all schools haven't been like that.

"I've worked in places where I've felt I've had to watch my back," he said.

"Before the transition, I presented as very queer ... my gender presentation in a female body was not normative," he said.

"It's just who I am. I've encountered a lot of hostility around that previously, from parents, students and a lack of support from other staff."

Hicks caught some negative attention last year from a right-wing media group for teaching students about activism. At the time, he was teaching at Grove Community School, a public alternative school with a mandate to teach kids with a focus "on social justice, community activism and the environment."

The commentary surrounding the stories wasn't just about whether it is right or wrong to teach the students about protesting — people said they couldn't tell what gender he was, and because of that, said hateful things and that he shouldn't be teaching children.

The experience prepared him for some backlash, he said. At his current school, he's "passing," but ready for the school to know, because of this article and the documentary, that he used to be a woman.

"When I'm not out, when I'm holding stuff back, it makes me feel smaller about myself, and it makes me less of an educator," he said.

Hicks said he had hoped or expected to be a role model for LGBT kids, but the lesson for his class turned out to be a little broader.

"What I've been told from students is that my transgender identity is a non-issue; what they get from me being honest with them about who I am is they get permission to be themselves," he said.

Majeed, the director, said the film is going to focus on Hick's life, but also explore trans people in different cultures through history — from Indian hijras to two-spirited native people — and how trans people have a history of being seen as wise, teachers in a position of respect.

Majeed is currently raising money to complete the film on Indiegogo.

Quoted

"What I've been told from students is that my transgender identity is a non-issue; what they get from me being honest with them about who I am is they get permission to be themselves." Lee Hicks

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From prisoner to peacemaker

Nelson Mandela. In eulogy to late leader, Obama implores people to embrace universal message of peace and justice

Amid cheers and song for the prisoner who became peacemaker, President Barack Obama energized tens of thousands of spectators and nearly 100 visiting heads of state Tuesday with a plea for the world to emulate Nelson Mandela, "the last great liberator of the 20th century."

Obama's eulogy was the rhetorical highlight of a memorial service in which South Africans celebrated Mandela's life with singing and dancing, often during dignitaries' speeches.

Lashing rain lent a freewheeling aspect to the memorial, with people taking shelter in the stadium's wide hallways, where they sang anti-apartheid anthems from the 1970s and 1980s. Foul weather kept many away, and the 95,000-capacity stadium was only two-thirds full.

Obama implored people to embrace Mandela's universal message of peace and justice, comparing the South African leader to Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln. Mandela spent 27 years in prison under a racist regime, and promoted forgiveness and reconciliation when he was finally freed.

Obama, who like Mandela became the first black president of his country, said he was inspired by Mandela as a student. The speech was greeted with thunderous applause, and many gave a standing ovation. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two girls dance in the rain outside of the memorial service for former South African president Nelson Mandela at the FNB Stadium in Soweto, near Johannesburg, South Africa, on Tuesday. TSVANGIRAYI MUKWAZHI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Celebration of a life

"We will never see the likes of Nelson Mandela again. But let me say to the young people of Africa, and young people around the world — you can make his life's work your own."

U.S. President Barack Obama

Nelson Mandela's widow Graca Machel. MATT DUNHAM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. President Barack Obama speaks to crowds attending the memorial service for Nelson Mandela. EVAN VUCCI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In attendance

In contrast to the wild applause given to Obama, South African President Jacob Zuma was booed. Many South Africans are unhappy with Zuma because of state corruption scandals, though his ruling African National Congress, once led by Mandela, remains the front-runner ahead of elections next year. Thabo Mbeki, who succeeded Mandela as president, got a rousing cheer as he entered the stands.

- A dazzling mix of royalty, statesmen and celebrities was in attendance.
- Among the heads of state and government were some from countries like Cuba that don't hold fully democratic elections.
- Other attending leaders criticized for their human rights records were Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema and Gambia's Yahya Jammeh.
- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon waved and bowed to spectators as he called Mandela "one of our greatest teachers."
- Actress Charlize Theron, model Naomi Campbell and singer Bono were among the celebrities paying final tribute.
- Mandela's widow, Graca Machel, and his former wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, gave each other a long hug before the ceremonies began.

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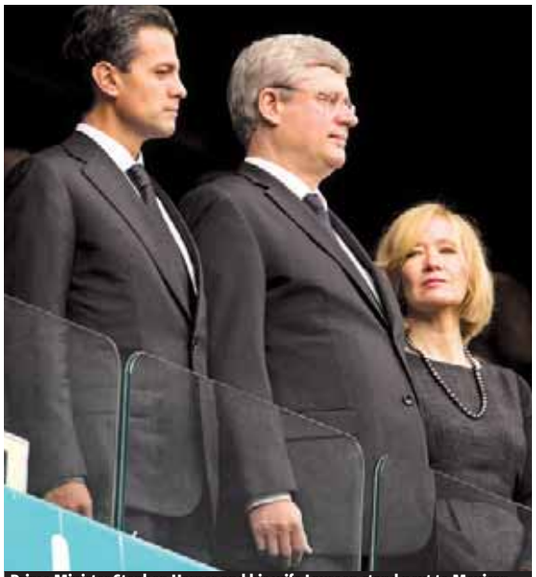
Canadians stand witness as world remembers Mandela



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife Laureen stand next to Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto Tuesday in Johannesburg, South Africa, during the memorial to Nelson Mandela. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

South Africa. Memorial was 'more a celebration than a funeral,' says Harper

A teeming, colourful sea of mourners danced and sang under a cold, exhilarating South African downpour Tuesday as tens of thousands of people — including political leaders from around the world — gathered to celebrate the life of Nelson Mandela.

A powerful coalition of politically diverse emissaries from across Canada was on hand for the four-hour ceremony, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and four of his predecessors: Jean Chrétien, Kim Campbell, Brian Mulroney and Joe Clark.

"Today was more a celebration than a funeral," Harper said as the ceremony came to a close. "A celebration of a very long life, but a very important life."

He called Mandela "one of the giants of history."

A steady, cold rain appeared to keep many away from the Soweto soccer stadium, where those who did brave the elements heard stirring calls to action from the likes of U.S. President Barack Obama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Chrétien said the exuberance made it unlike any memorial he has seen.

"It is a great occasion of respect because he's admired by everybody," he said.

Campbell said on Twitter: "We are cold, wet but still exhilarated!" THE CANADIAN PRESS

Let it rain

"In our culture the rain is a blessing. Only great, great people are memorialized with it."

Harry Tshabalala, a driver for the justice ministry in South Africa

Sign of a thaw? Obama shakes hands with Cuban leader during memorial

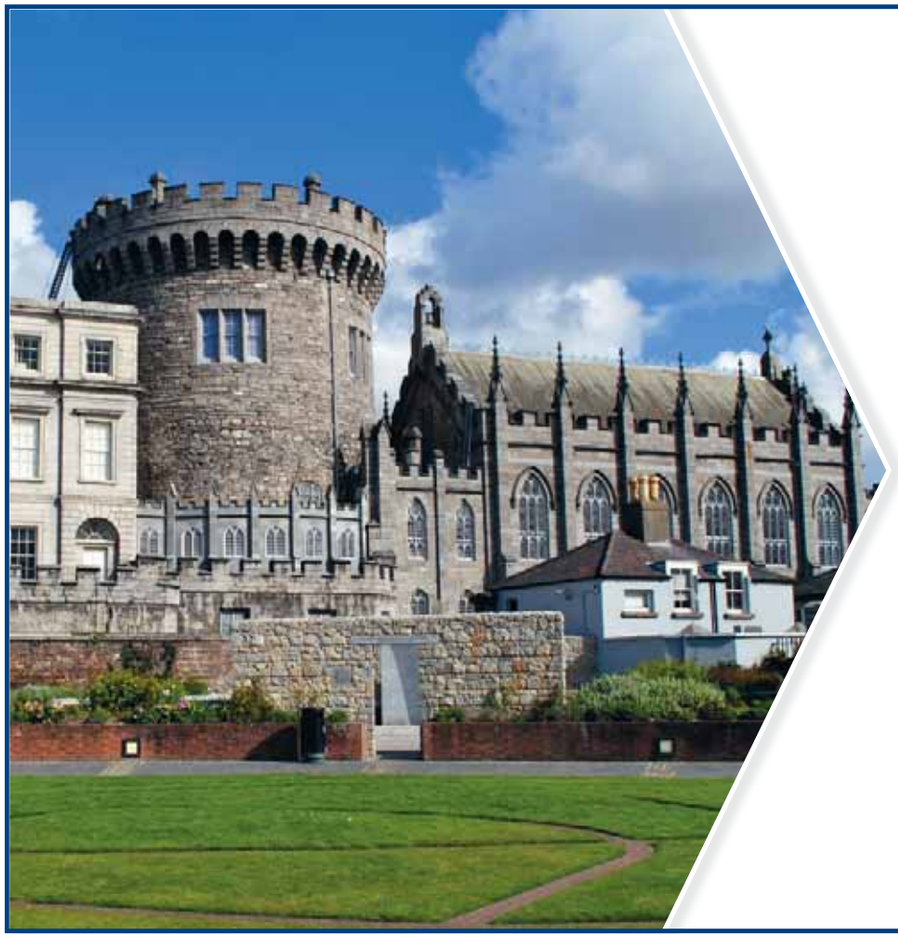
U.S. President Barack Obama shook hands with Cuban President Raul Castro Tuesday at a memorial service for Nelson Mandela, a simple gesture that signalled possible thawing between the leaders of two Cold War foes.

The brief encounter between the U.S. and Cuban president came during a ceremony that celebrated the former South African president's legacy of reconciliation. Obama was greeting a line of world leaders attending the memorial in Johannesburg before delivering his own eulogy in which he urged a new generation to embrace Mandela's life work as their own.

Obama adviser Ben Rhodes said the handshakes with Castro and other world leaders weren't planned in advance and didn't involve any substantive discussion, but were simply an exchange of greetings as the U.S. leader made his way to the podium to speak.

Still, more than half a century after the U.S. cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba, such exchanges between American and Cuban leaders are exceedingly rare. U.S. officials often have gone to great lengths to avoid having presidents meet Cuban leaders, even in passing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. President Barack Obama shakes hands with Cuban President Raul Castro in Soweto, South Africa. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Study: Dad's diet can play a role in fetal development

Birth defects. Father's intake of vitamin B9 prior to conception shown to influence health of offspring

It's well-known that what a mother eats before and during pregnancy can affect fetal development, but research now suggests that a father's diet may also play a critical role in a newborn's health.

Women are advised to get sufficient amounts of vitamin B9, or folate to prevent miscarriages or birth defects, but the way that a father's diet can influence the health and development of offspring has received little attention, said Sarah Kimmins, a specialist in reproductive biology at McGill University who led a study looking at the effects of paternal folate levels.

"It can't all be on the mother," Kimmins said Tuesday from Montreal. "Our study and others are now showing that the father can be a route for the transmission of birth defects and can influence offspring health.

"Guys need to pay attention to what they're doing in terms of lifestyle choices prior to having a baby, just like the woman does."

In a study of mice published in the journal Nature Communications, researchers found that a low-folate diet in males was linked to an increased rate of birth defects among their pups, compared to the rate among pups whose fathers were fed a folate-sufficient diet.

"When we looked at the offspring, when we looked at the fetuses, we were really quite shocked that we saw the birth defects," Kimmins said Tuesday from Montreal.

"We had increased changes in the pregnancy rate, and we expected that we would affect fertility, but we didn't expect that we would have these paternal-driven birth defects in response to a folate-deficient diet."

The birth anomalies, which occurred across the litters sired by folate-deficient mice, included spinal malformations, cranio-facial defects such as a shortened jaw, underdeveloped digits and club feet.

"Those were the types of things we saw as a consequence of that diet," Kimmins said. "So they're quite striking birth defects."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Fredericton

Pot-smoking Mountie charged with assaulting fellow officer

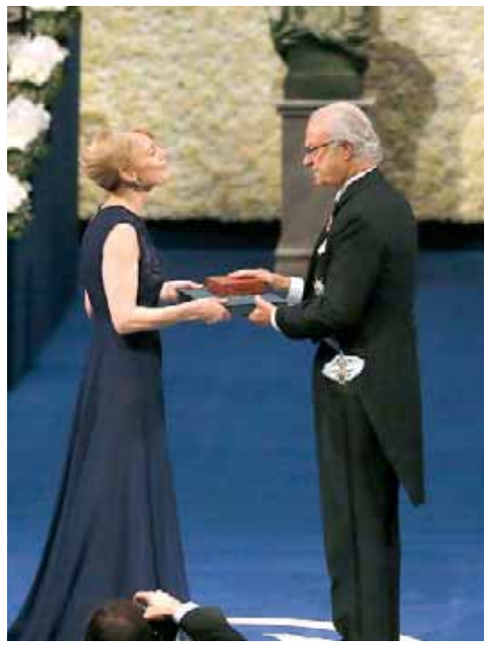
The Public Safety Department for Fredericton, N.B., says a Mountie who complained about not being able to smoke medicinal marijuana on the job was subdued with a stun gun and charged with assaulting another RCMP officer.

Alycia Morehouse, a spokeswoman for the department, says Cpl. Ron Francis is undergoing a psychiatric assessment after he was arrested last week. He is due back in provincial court on Jan. 6.

An RCMP spokeswoman says the Mounties were concerned about Francis's well-being when they found him Friday on a street in downtown Fredericton.

Morehouse says the RCMP called Fredericton police for help because the city is not within RCMP jurisdiction.

She says Francis was hit with a stun gun at one point. THE CANADIAN PRESS



Alice Munro's Nobel Prize accepted by daughter Jenny

Jenny Munro, daughter of the 2013 Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature Alice Munro, receives the Nobel in her place from Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf in Stockholm Tuesday. Alice Munro, a Canadian short-story legend, is only the 13th woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, and the first Canadian-based author to receive it. FRANK AUGSTEIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Ranger Joe Amarualik drives his snowmobile on the ice during a Canadian Ranger sovereignty patrol near Eureka, on Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, in 2007. Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway have all been trying to assert jurisdiction over parts of the Arctic, which is believed to hold up to a quarter of the planet's undiscovered oil and gas. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Can we claim Santa's home? Putin says no

Sabre rattling. Russia counters Canada's bid to expand Arctic turf with military directive

Russian President Vladimir Putin is pawing the snow over Canada's claim to the North Pole.

A day after Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird confirmed Canada is extending its Arctic territorial claim beyond the area mapped by federal scientists, Putin responded Tuesday with a highly visible message to the Russian military.

"I would like you to devote special attention to deploying infrastructure and military units in the Arctic," Putin was quoted saying in televised comments at a meeting of the Defence Ministry Board in Moscow.

The country requires "every lever for the protection of its security and national interests there," Putin said for the cameras.

Baird held a news conference Monday on Parliament Hill where he asserted the Arctic claim will include the North Pole, although Canada has yet to do the mapping work to support its bid.

Russia is already drilling for oil in the high Arctic, and in 2007 a Russian team planted the country's flag on the sea floor at the magnetic pole.

Baird's spokesman Rick Roth responded to Putin's latest Arctic chest-thumping by stating Canada will defend its sovereignty in the region "in adherence to international law, and through science-based measures."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hot property

1.2M

Last week, Canada made a formal scientific submission to the United Nations claiming 1.2 million square kilometres of seabed under the Atlantic, as well as a preliminary claim in the Arctic Ocean.

San Francisco

13 plead guilty in PayPal attack

Thirteen people have pleaded guilty to helping briefly disable PayPal as part of a protest that authorities say was organized by the hacking group Anonymous.

Ten of the defendants pleaded guilty to felony and misdemeanour charges of intentionally damaging a protected computer. If they stay out of legal trouble, the U.S. Department of Justice plans to drop the felony charges. Three other defendants pleaded guilty to misdemeanour charges in San Jose federal court and face similar sentences.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Uruguay. Senate expected to approve weed market

Uruguay's Senate was finishing its final debate Tuesday before voting on an audacious and risky plan to create the world's first national marijuana market, with the state regulating the entire process of growing, selling and using a drug that is illegal almost everywhere else.

Approval late Tuesday was all but assured, given the ruling coalition's majority and support from President Jose Mujica, who says he's convinced the global drug war is a failure and that state regulations can do a better job than weapons to contain addictions and defeat a thriving illegal market.

Former Health Minister Alfredo Solari, a Colorado Party senator, warned that children and adolescents will more easily get their hands on pot, and that "the effects of this policy on public health will be terrible."

But Sen. Roberto Conde, a former deputy foreign minister with the ruling Broad Front, said marijuana "is already established in Uruguay. It's a drug that is already seen as very low risk and enormously easy to get." Constanza Moreira, a fellow Broad Front senator, said, "This law will return us to the vanguard of Latin America."

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Winnipeg stands up to violence against women

Disturbing pattern. The Peg plants a flag next to UN campaign in hopes of raising awareness on female aboriginal victims

Manitoba's capital is the first Canadian city to join a United Nations campaign aimed at reducing violence against women and there's hope that the move will specifically address why a disproportionate number of Canada's aboriginal women are victims.

Winnipeg joins more than 15 other cities around the world, including New Delhi, Cairo and Kigali, Rwanda. The program has led to the inclusion of women's safety audits in urban planning in some of the cities and the banning of sexual harassment in public places in others.

In Winnipeg, police plan to team up with community groups to identify which parts of the city need immediate attention. Some aboriginal leaders are hoping the initiative will focus on sexual and racial violence facing native women, including the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Manitoba.

Leslie Spillett, executive director of the native organization Ka Ni Kanichihk, said the province has the third-highest number of such women in Canada.

"Currently, there are 79 documented cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women," she said Tuesday. "This initiative will help to shine the light on the underlying factors that replicate this alarming and increasing rate of violence but, more importantly, we hope that it will identify appropriate and long-term prevention strategies."

Spillett noted that most of the other cities identified to participate in the UN campaign are in the developing world. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Scratching out Santa's hit list

The Abbotsford, B.C., police is admitting "even Santa makes mistakes" with its greeting card that features a bad Santa writing "I will not play with guns." Last year's card, featuring Chief Bob Rich as Santa in full tactical gear, drew a massive response, said Const. Ian MacDonald. MacDonald said response to last year's card was 90 per cent positive, but added it was "probably over the top" to send a card with Santa dressed in SWAT gear to 80 prolific offenders, property offenders, and people involved in drugs, gangs and domestic abuse.

COURTESY ABBOTSFORD POLICE

Suicides. Military searching for answers

Former soldiers, veterans advocates and lawmakers were presented with duelling theories about what might be at the heart of a sudden chain of suicides and attempted suicides this fall among serving members of the Canadian military.

Testimony before two Parliamentary committees Tuesday struggled to explain what some say is inexplicable — the tragic, deeply personal decision of someone to end their own life.

Although the Harper government has invested millions of dollars bolstering mental-health services at National Defence, the House of Commons defence committee was told scant attention is paid to helping transition to civilian life.

The veterans affairs committee also heard that the perceived financial uncertainty of veterans benefits is driving some soldiers to the brink. The debate is taking place against the backdrop of at least four apparent military suicides within a week in different parts of the country. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Electric-helicopter designers raise $1.65 million through crowdfunding campaign

Volocopter. Creators of ultra-light aircraft hope to start selling them in 2015 for delivery in 2016

An image of the Volocopter. CONTRIBUTED

Fresh from completing the first electric flight, the German engineers at E-Volo have scooped $1.65 million US in a crowdfunding campaign for their "Volocopter" design, believed to be a world record.

The craft is an ultra-light aircraft that runs on batteries. CEO Stephan Wolf is excited.

Why do people like it so much?
E-mobility is extending through so many industries and this has captured the imagination — so many people have sent emails saying they love it. Also, the launch and landing are key with flights and electric aircraft can be controlled better.

When will they hit the market?
We will get the license next year — so far we have not even flown in it. After that we can start to sell them in 2015 for delivery in 2016. At this point we are only producing ultra-light class for two people but in theory, it can be scaled to any size, even powered only by batteries.

Will this be the future of drones?
The term is a bit military but of course it is possible. We have remote controlled a small model so it is perfectly realistic to build drones, but at the moment we are thinking of manned aircraft.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Quoted

"This has captured the imagination — so many people have sent emails saying they love it."

CEO Stephan Wolf, on why people seem to love the Volocopter.

Comet chaser. Scientists get set to give deep-space probe its wake-up call

When Europe's Rosetta probe gets roused from its deep-space slumber next month, scientists are hoping it will be fit and ready for the final stage of its daring mission to land a spacecraft on a comet.

There is little room for mistakes as the coming months involve a high-speed chase, a delicate dance around comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, and finally the precision drop of a lander onto its icy surface — set for Nov. 11.

"Imagine trying to parachute onto the tip of a mountain," said Paolo Ferri, head of mission operations at the European Space Agency.

The lander — called Philae — will drop onto the surface of 67P and latch on using a harpoon, to prevent it from drifting off into space due to the comet's weak gravity.

Launched in 2004, Rosetta has already spent almost 10 years in space preparing for its big day.

The spacecraft has been in hibernation for more than two years now to conserve energy.

An artist's impression of the Rosetta orbiter deploying the Philae lander to comet 67P. C.CARREAU/ESA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

One key question scientists hope the mission can help answer is whether comets are responsible for the water on Earth, as comets have remained largely unchanged since the beginning of the universe.

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Faulty breast implants

Court convicts firm's founder

French firm PIP founder, Jean-Claude Mas – who sold breast implants filled with industrial-grade silicone and prone to leaks to some 125,000 women around the world – was convicted of fraud Tuesday and sentenced to four years in prison.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Breaking glass ceiling

GM gets new CEO

Mary Barra

General Motors product development chief Mary Barra has been named the company's new CEO, the first female head of a U.S. car company.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New direction. Lululemon founder and chairman out after controversial remark

Lululemon Athletica named a new chief executive Tuesday and announced founder Chip Wilson is stepping down as chairman as the athletic clothing retailer looked to put a difficult 2013 behind it.

Lululemon has been struggling to deal with issues regarding the sheerness of its Luon yoga pants after pulling them from store shelves in April because they were see-through.

In an interview last month, Wilson ignited a storm of criticism following a Bloomberg TV interview regarding the pants.

"Quite frankly, some women's bodies just actually don't work for it," he said. "It's really about the rubbing through the thighs, how much pressure is there."

This marks the end of the five years of dramatic growth of the Vancouver-based company with Wilson and outgoing CEO Christine Day at the helm. Laurent Potdevin, previously with Toms Shoes, will take over as CEO in 2014. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The outspoken Lululemon Athletica Inc. founder and Chairman of the Board Chip Wilson is stepping down as chairman of Lululemon. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Altruism? Silicon Valley fights to protect personal data ... and the bottom line

Even as Silicon Valley speaks out against the U.S. government's surveillance methods, technology companies are turning a handsome profit by mining personal data and peering into people's online habits.

The industry's profit machine has become tarnished by revelations that the National Security Agency digs deep into the everyday lives of Web surfers. As a result, companies including Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Yahoo are becoming more aggressive in their attempts to counter any perception that they voluntarily give the government access to users' email and other sensitive information.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Advertising dollars

At stake is the trust of massive online audiences that attract digital advertising. As companies collect personal data and learn more about each user's interests and habits, advertising becomes easier to sell.

Market Minute

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HYPNAGOGIA SOUNDS LIKE A SNOOZE

JUST SAYIN'

Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

OK, it's time to get up close and personal.

Do you take naps?

I'm not sure what prompted that question, but it occurred to me during a session in the "thinking chair" in my office.

Some of my best ideas happen in the thinking chair, usually just before someone starts snoring and the walls start to reverberate. If I ever find out who's doing it…

Turns out I'm not the only one who becomes inspired in that twilight zone between sleeping and waking, that place where you're starting to dream but haven't fallen asleep yet.

That state, which is called hypnagogia, was visited frequently by Edison, Einstein, Aristotle and Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dali, he of the landscapes featuring melting clocks. Hypnagogic, dude.

So, napping is not a sign of increasing senility, but a powerful creative tool. Hence the term "power nap." Superman probably knocks off a few power zzzzs when he's all cosy in the Fortress of Solitude. Nobody calls Superman senile, although there is that giant 's' on his chest.

There is some research to suggest power naps help prevent heart attacks, although that could be because people who engage in cardiovascular exercise have a tendency to get calm and drowsy after their workout. The jury is still out … like a light.

If you've tried power napping and only end up feeling groggy afterwards, it's probably because you're not doing it right. I know, I know, what's to learn? Close your eyes, count to 10 … how long was I out?

If you go past Hypnagogia Land into the realms of deeper sleep lasting longer than 20 minutes, that's not good, as you could end up with sleep inertia, which makes you groggy and grumpy.

Dali, he of the hypnagogic melting clocks, had a trick that prevented him from succumbing to the rapture of the depths. He would hold a key in his right hand, which he would then dangle over a plate. As soon as he started to heed the call of the Sandman, the key would drop out of his hand and clatter on the plate. Then he'd be up, refreshed, and back to his melting clocks. He called it "just the necessary amount of repose."

If you're still worried what everyone will think if you catnap at the controls of your 747, remember that entire cultures are based on the nap, only they call it the siesta, which sounds poetic, lyrical. People who take siestas never drool, for example.

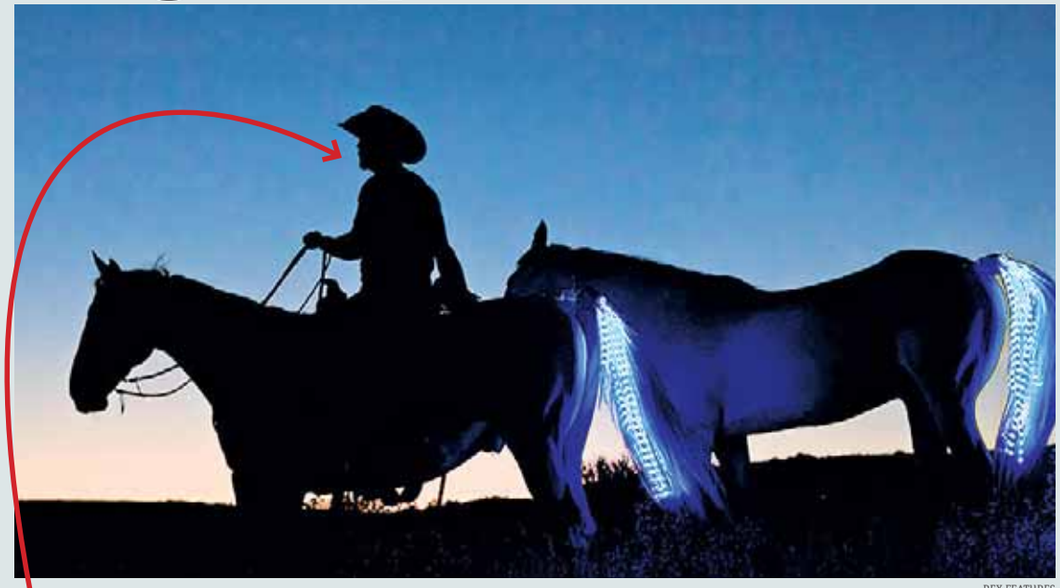
The siesta is associated with the twin drivers of leisurely noonday meals and warm summer afternoons characteristic of Mediterranean climates, but you can try it here too, where it's all fast food and frost.

And if you start to do your best work immediately after a power nap, remember that it worked for Edison and Einstein. OK, maybe you have to try a little harder.

Five more minutes?

ZOOM

It lights up a horse's behind



REX FEATURES

Safety first with glitzy horse lights

A California-based firm has invented the first safety lighting for horses. Tail Lights are LED lights that drape through a horse's tail to provide a safe way to warn motorists of a horse and its rider. They are the brainchild of Sami Gros, who developed the idea after her friend was almost killed when a car struck her horse. **METRO**

Founder says

"It all began following a life-threatening accident. Despite using reflective gear, the horse ridden by my friend was hit from behind by a car as we were approaching the barn around dusk."

Sami Gros, founder of Tail Lights

'An attractive visual presence on the road'

The system consists of six water-resistant LED strips in the shape of a horse's tail. The LED strands are attached to the base of the tail by a specially designed neoprene tail wrap. According to its designers, the lights do not emit heat, are water resistant and allow for free movement of the tail — and make "an attractive visual presence on the road." **METRO**

A Kickstarter campaign was launched to raise the $100,000 needed to make the innovation widely available.

COURTESY TAIL-LIGHTS.COM

Clickbait

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro Online

COURTESY BOOMF

As the holiday shopping season descends on us all, Metro has a few ideas on what to get that person in your life who lives on social media. Here are some sites that will take your Instagram photos and turn them into Insta-gifts.

Printstagram (printstagr.am)
A one-stop shop for turning your favourite social media photos into everything from cards, to posters or stickers.

Stitchtagram (stitchtagram.com):
Based in Washington, D.C., this company lets you design pillows, bags and purses using your Instagram snapshots.

Boomf (boomf.com):
This site will literally print Instagram photos onto bite-sized marshmallows (pictured) and deliver them to your door. What else would you expect from a company whose tagline is "turn your memories into magical morsels?"

Twitter

@metropicks asked: "We will never see the likes of Nelson Mandela again," Barack Obama said at Mandela's memorial. Who do you think will be the next Mandela?

@WTarcisio: No one will replace Nelson Mandela and also Michael Jackson, Ayrton Senna and Elvis Plesley.

@MA6hp: According to @kanyewest he is new #Mandela.

@flarkcon: That's ironic

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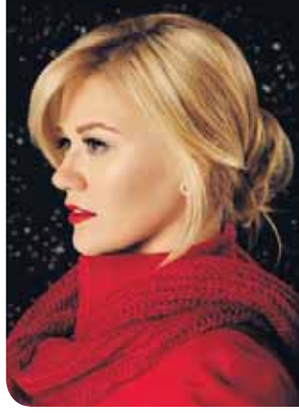

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Forget Middle-earth, movies are overrun with strange elves

New movies. From the North Pole to Nazi Germany to stories that go nowhere, the elfin character gets lots of play on screen

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

Turn the page for more coverage of The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug

Evangeline Lilly stars in The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug. CONTRIBUTED

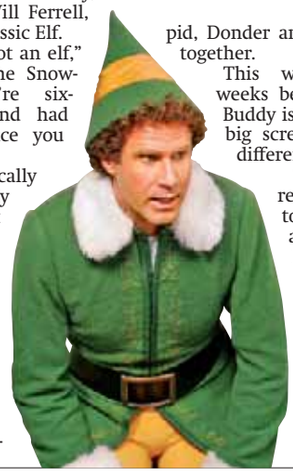
When we think of elves at this time of year visions of Santa's helpers fill our heads.

The cute, industrious and diminutive creatures from the North Pole can be seen everywhere in December in Christmas TV specials, greeting cards and movies like Arthur Christmas and Santa Claus: The Movie.

One of the most famous movie elves is Buddy, played by Will Ferrell, in the neoclassic Elf.

"You're not an elf," says Leon the Snowman. "You're six-foot-three and had a beard since you were 15."

So technically he's not really an elf, just a human raised by elves, but he has more Christmas spirit than Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donder and Blitzen put together.



Will Ferrell became a neoclassic elf in the Christmas movie Elf. CONTRIBUTED

This weekend, just weeks before Dec. 25, Buddy is joined on the big screen by a very different kind of elf.

"She's slightly reckless and totally ruthless and doesn't hesitate to kill."

That's how Evangeline Lilly describes the 600-year-old "she-elf" Tauriel from this weekend's The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug.

The bow-and-arrow wielding character is new to the J.R.R. Tolkien movie franchise, created by director Peter Jackson and his co-writers Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens.

"She's our redhead," says Boyens.

"We created her for that reason. To bring that energy into the film, that feminine energy. We believe it's completely within the spirit of Tolkien."

Buddy and Tauriel are just two of the many kinds of movie elves.

Elves (or Gelfling as they're called in the flick), are the main focus of the Jim Henson film The Dark Crystal.

Dobby the House Elf was voted the No. 1 favourite magical creature in the Harry Potter series by NextMovie.com and Thor: The Dark World featured Dark Elves, an ancient race of dangerous beings whose spaceships are powered by black holes.

The cheese-ball B-movie Elves features the tag line, "They're Not Working for Santa ... Anymore."

Well, if not Santa, then who?

Nazis, that's who.

Finally Tom Cruise consorted with an elf named Honeythorn Gump in Legend, the Ridley Scott film The New York Times called "a slapdash amalgam of Old Testament, King Arthur, The Lord of the Rings and any number of comic books."

Swiss actor David Bennett played the feisty elfin sidekick who not only is the protector of the world's last two unicorns but, along with elves Screwball, Brown Tom and Oona, helps Cruise's character save the world from the nasty Lord of Darkness (Tim Curry).

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Benedict Cumberbatch. 'I feel like I'm the cheat at the table, really'

Benedict Cumberbatch GETTY IMAGES

Most actors involved in the Hobbit series of films talk about the joys of becoming de facto residents of New Zealand, moving to the lower hemisphere to film three movies back-to-back-to-back. But Benedict Cumberbatch, who performs as the greedy dragon Smaug (and did some motion-capture work as the Necromancer), was there for barely more than a week.

"That was the biggest con of doing this. Hearing all these stories of the live action harrowing-ness, and all the amazing work these people put in, I did my work in about eight days," Cumberbatch says. "I feel like I'm the cheat at the table really."

On top of that, while the bulk of his screen time is spent sparring with his Sherlock co-star, Martin Freeman, as the titular hobbit, he and Freeman weren't actually present for any of each others performances.

"I didn't spend any sort of live time with Martin, which was sad," he says. "We know each other quite well so we kind of second-guessed in a weird way our performances to some degree, I guess. It's a very different dynamic, very different. (On 'Sherlock') I'm in the room with him and I'm not the flying, psychotic napalm machine. I could be dismissive of him as Dr. Watson as my Sherlock, but they're friends. Very different."

While he and Freeman are old pals, there was a whole cast of co-stars he missed out on befriending.

"Sadly, I met hardly any of the cast," he says. "Richard (Armitage) and I met once. I crossed over with people as they were coming back to do I think their third stint, I think. I've had scenes with people I haven't even met yet. So that is bizarre."

Also bizarre? Embodying a dragon for his motion-capture performance, something a bit more abstract and reptilian than Andy Serkis' work as Gollum.

"It's only going to be an impression of something that's a serpentine reptile who can breathe fire and fly because I'm a limited biped mammal, sorry about that," he jokes. "But Peter (Jackson) knew that when I auditioned. So we worked with my sort of negatives and tried to turn them into positives."

That work involved quite a bit of contortion and discomfort. "One of the ways I did it was trying to squeeze my legs together, just forgetting the fact that they were legs, just trying to feel that as an elongated body." NED EHRBAR/MWN

Luke Evans no longer waiting in the wings

New movie. His work as Bard the Bowman was shot ages ago but it's just finally coming to audiences with the latest installment of The Hobbit

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

Luke Evans finally shows up in The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug. CONTRIBUTED

Last year, as the first Hobbit installment raked in more than $1 billion worldwide, Welsh actor Luke Evans sat quietly by as Martin Freeman, Sir Ian McKellen and Richard Armitage got all the attention, since his work as Bard the Bowman wouldn't turn up until the second film, The Desolation of Smaug.

Well, Evans has to wait no longer.

After three Lord of the Rings films and the first Hobbit, it's kind of a foregone conclusion that New Zealand is a beautiful place, isn't it?
Yeah, I think we need to just give up now. We all know this. Maybe we should just say, 'Actually, it's a s—hole,' (laughs). No, it's great. The Kiwis, they're very proud of their country and how they've preserved it in a really beautiful way, especially the South Island. It's so unspoiled.

You filmed your part before even the first Hobbit had come out. What was it like last year watching the reactions and box office come in for that one, knowing that to audiences you still weren't quite a part of it?
It was enjoyable, but it was also a bit of, 'Aw, shame I'm not part of this,' you know? But I've been very patient, I've bided my time, and now my turn has come and now I'm in the story and I'm not going anywhere now, I'm here till the end. But it was exciting to watch.

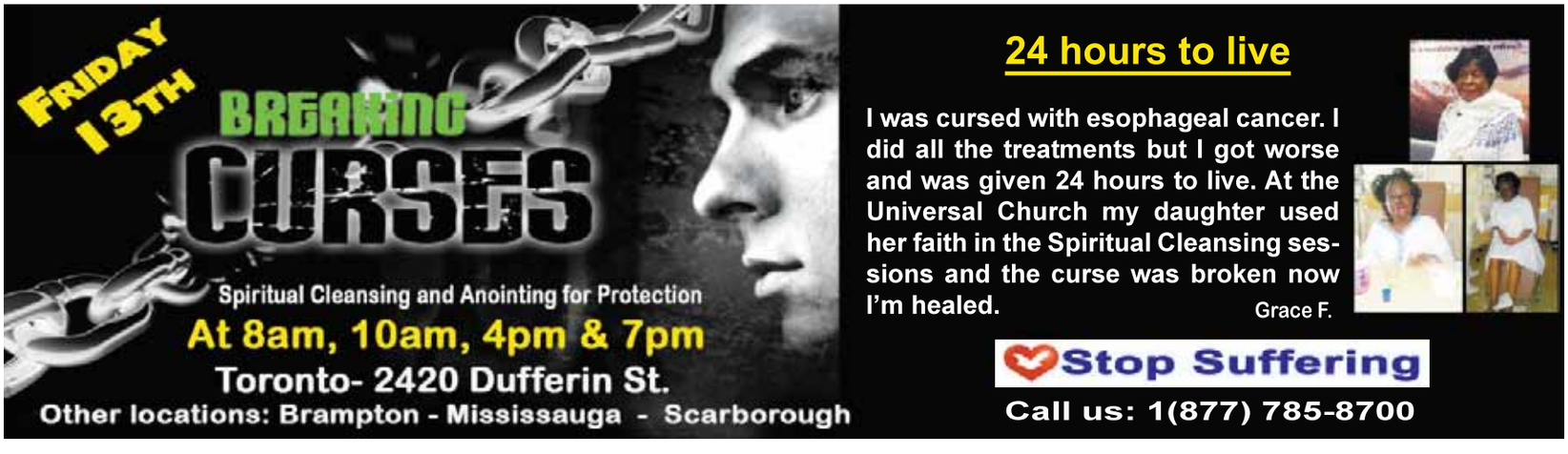
Do you have an action figure yet?
I have a Lego character, that's quite cool. It's not so much action, he can't bend his arms, but he looks quite cool. And he has a Lego Laketown as well, and a little plastic bow and arrow. And he's got a really angry face.

Unboxing

> "I have a Lego character, that's quite cool."
>
> **Luke Evans**
> Talking about getting an action figure in his image

So you didn't have any input on the Lego face?
No, no, obviously not. But it's great. I mean, it's a lovely thing, isn't it? That's the fun thing about being part of something as big as The Hobbit, things like that happen. Apparently Denny's, the cafe, have a whole Laketown menu. They have, like, the Bard's Brew and the Bowman's Pumpkin Pie. I'm tempted to go down there and order it all and just sit there munching through a Denny's breakfast.

I wouldn't recommend that, actually.
No, no, of course.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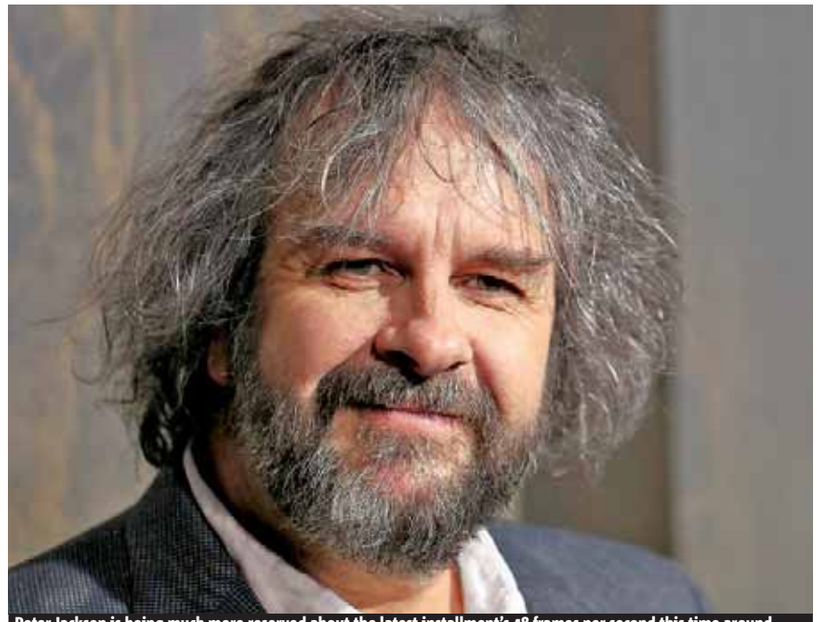
Peter Jackson insists: 'We're being pretty generous with one year'

Interview. Director of The Hobbit trilogy understands why fans might be upset by this edition's cliffhanger but points to others who have done worse

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood



Peter Jackson is being much more reserved about the latest installment's 48 frames per second this time around.
MATT SAYLES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

While the first Hobbit film turned in huge business at the box office, Peter Jackson faced some harsh criticism from fans and reviewers with his return to Middle-earth. And as much as he would have liked to course-correct, there wasn't much wiggle room going into the second installment.

"There wasn't really any ability to respond too much because we had already shot everything pretty much, apart from the 10 weeks of pick-ups we did this year, which half of that was the third movie," he says.

"By the time we were done with pick-ups I was just getting in my groove."

Some things have changed this year, though. From Jackson and the film company.

There's less chest-pumping about high frame rates — in fact Jackson and company apparently aren't eager to bring up 48 frames per second this time around, though it will be offered at select screenings.

And the story is bigger, with more interweaving plot threads to give audiences a break periodically from Bilbo and the dwarfs.

"The good thing with the middle film is that you don't have to set things up, you can just drop into the story assuming that no one is going to see this film that didn't see the first one," he says.

"Unfortunately, (despite) the romance of the big screen, the 3-D and everything else, the ultimate life of these movies is going to be one on Blu-rays, download and hopefully for years to come. That is where they are going to find their ultimate resting place. So you are telling a continuous story. It's three movies but it is telling one narrative arc and you are trying to make each film work individually. This is the part in the middle where you pick up your foot and put it the gas pedal."

With the latest installment, Jackson is well aware some viewers might find its cliffhanger ending a bit unsatisfying, with a full year to wait for the conclusion.

"We did have a discussion about it. It was just a chance that was very rare where you do films back to back, three films back-to-back, to be able to end on a cliffhanger," he says.

"I remember when I was 17, 19 years old, I remember the big Empire Strikes Back cliffhanger. It was, like, three years before the next one came out. We're being pretty generous with one year."

Richard Armitage. It's hard out there for a dwarf in Middle-earth

Richard Armitage GETTY IMAGES

As Thorin Oakenshield, the leader of the 13-dwarf team out to best a dragon and return their people to power, Richard Armitage has his work cut out for him in The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug. But the British actor probably wasn't expecting that work to be quite so harrowing, like when they filmed an elaborate action sequence involving the dwarfs riding in barrels down a raging river.

"I think the most dangerous part of filming the barrel sequence was when we were in these little cut-off Flintstones-style barrels which were powered by our feet. It was like dodgems and we were bumping into each other," Armitage says. "It came together in quite a few different places on the Pelorus River, which was an extremely fast-flowing river. I did end up getting dragged under by that very current."

And if the forces of nature trying to drown him weren't enough, he also had director Peter Jackson's best technicians trying their hands at it as well.

"They were dumping tons of water on us and trying to get us to go under the water. But I think Martin had the most difficult role in that, because he wasn't in a barrel. But I think it was worth it."

NED EHRBAR/MWN

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Awards season

AFI announces top films of 2013

Steve McQueen's historical saga 12 Years a Slave, David O. Russell's con artist romp American Hustle, Ryan Coogler's numbing Fruitvale Station and Alfonso Cuarón's space odyssey Gravity round out the American Film Institute's top 10 movies of the year.

Also landing on the list, announced Monday: Paul Greengrass' Somali pirate drama Captain Phillips; Spike Jonze's futuristic computer love tale Her; Ethan and Joel Coen's folk scene-focused dark comedy Inside Llewyn Davis; John Lee Hancock's Disney comedy Saving Mr. Banks; and Martin Scorsese's provocative stockbroker story The Wolf of Wall Street.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lesser-known Lennon film contains eerie premonition

How I Won the War. The 1967 satirical movie, by the director of Help! and A Hard Day's Night, is rife with absurdism and gags — but a line in the final battle scene is what's most memorable

MATT PRIGGE
Metro World News in New York City

On Dec. 8, 1980, John Lennon was gunned down by deranged fan Mark David Chapman. Lennon, like the Beatles, has been examined every which way, even idolized in a manner that can sand over his rougher edges.

Still, some of his output gets ignored, including much of his solo work; his by-many-accounts unlistenable art records with Yoko Ono; the couple's avant-garde films; and his books, packed silly with aggressive wordplay.

And then there's his acting. We don't mean A Hard Day's Night and Help! (Both are classics, although there's an argument to be made that Help! is even better. It's goofier and its absurd sense of humour, while owing more to director Richard Lester and writer Charles Wood than the Beatles, anticipates the likes of Monty Python.) We mean the only film in which he didn't play himself (or "himself").

That would be How I Won the War, made in 1967. A dense, kaleidoscopic and bracing satire, it was once again made by the team of Lester and Wood. Lester was a poppy stylist who married fast-paced imagery — he was called "the grandfather of the music video," which prompted him to half-jokingly ask for a blood test — to a bemused and skeptical world view. Wood was, like Lennon, an incorrigible wordsmith.

Despite dominating its advertisements, Lennon is only a supporting player in How I Won the War. The lead is played by Michael Crawford, the future Phantom of the Opera, who at that point was a go-to bumbling, stammering, pratfalling man-child.

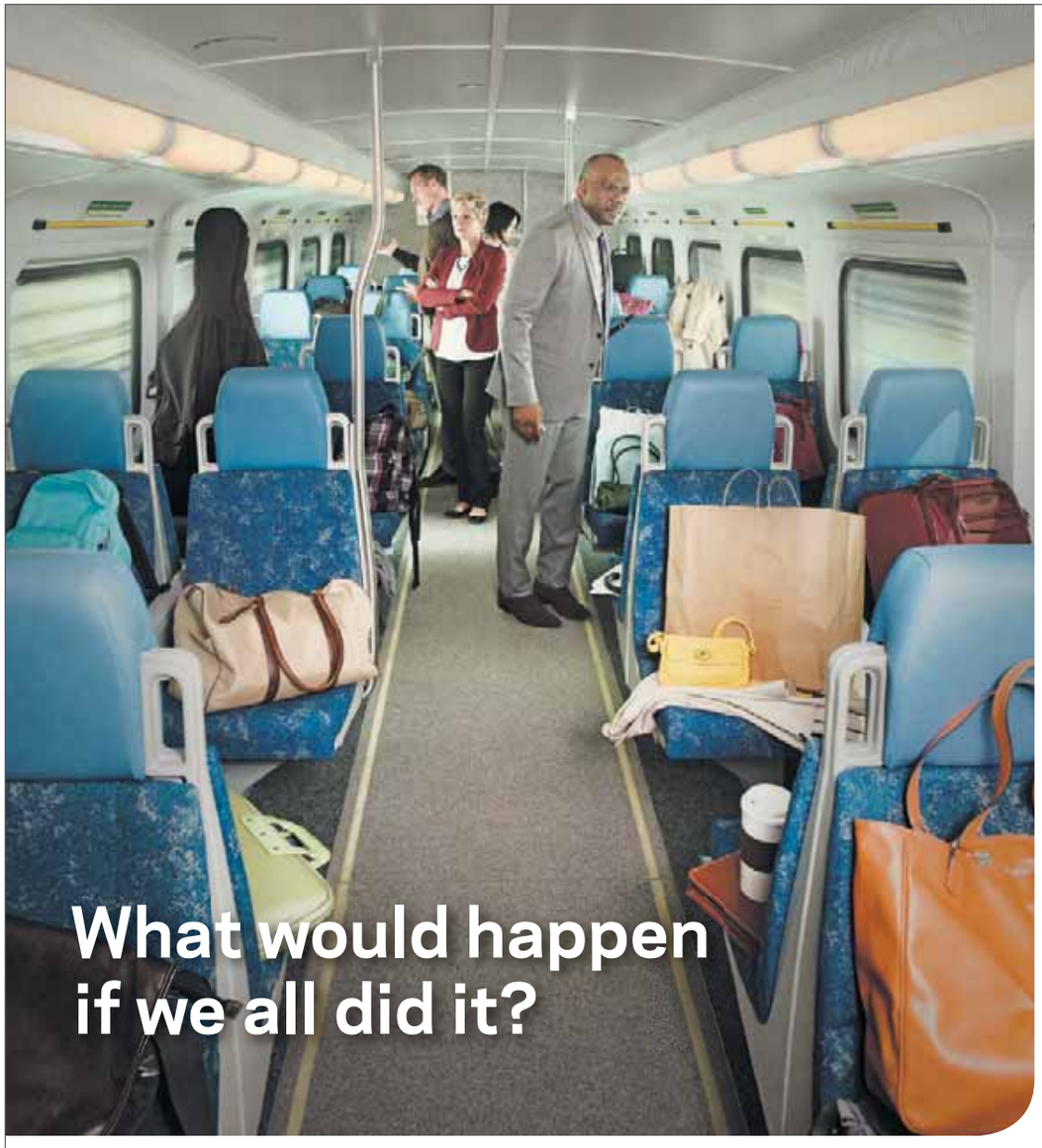
The film was based on a satirical novel by Patrick Ryan, but Lester and Wood went further into absurdism. Here, Crawford's obliviously proper lieutenant takes his troops, who all hate him, to North Africa on a mission to set up a cricket pitch.

The plot is beyond loose, there to buttress a frankly exhausting stream of gags and Brechtian devices. Actors, among them Lennon's Gripweed, address the camera. The antics of the token clownish soldier (Jack MacGowran) — who, as it's gradually revealed, is actually totally insane — sometimes get fitted with a laugh track, decades before Oliver Stone did the same thing in Natural Born Killers.

Chilling scene

- The final battle in How I Won the War features a moment even more chilling than its makers could have imagined. Lennon's character is fatally wounded. He drops to the ground and, still alive and lucid, stares into the camera and says: "I knew this would happen. You knew it would happen, didn't you?"

Lennon was a supporting player in How I Won the War. CONTRIBUTED



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METROLINX

Angry Birds are off to the races with soapbox derby

Gaming. Our favourite pig-bashing critters flock back for a zany downhill contest that's easy to get into, but harder to master

RICHARD PECKETT
Metro World News

Any birdbrain can get behind the wheel of a rickety soapbox racer, but it'll take a gaming boffin to complete Angry Birds Go!, game developer Rovio's latest title out now. The 3D Piggy Island derby pits players against classic characters (Red, Chuck, Stella, King Pig) in wacky races like Fruit Splat, Versus and Race Challenges.

It's a virtual petrol-head shot of Mario Kart-style mischief, suitable for any occasion from the morning commute to curling up on the couch for an evening session.

The game is as addictive as it is Luddite-proof. The company that has expanded its Angry Birds franchise into animations, theme parks and merchandise plans to release a feature film in 2016. Rovio Entertainment EVP Jami Laes tells Metro about why the free download is the best on the market and the future of entertainment.

Did you deliberately make this version particularly user-friendly compared to earlier Angry Birds games?
As our audience has grown, we want to make the gaming experience as accessible as possible. The game is easy to get into but hard to master and hard to beat. There's a level of learning required — you have to peel away the game's layers to progress.

What are those layers?
The core is always the same: the soapbox derby with one character and one kart. But as you progress, you learn about top speed, acceleration and handling and how the characters have different powers. Gamers learn how to utilize their skill sets for the different events: Fruit Splat, Time Challenges or Boss Fights — it's a tactical and strategic game.

Is this to prolong the game's shelf life?
Definitely. By providing more diversity and different challenges, we find it's the best way to keep players engaged and really get into the gaming experience for a longer period of time.

It reminds me of Mario Kart and Sonic. Did you have these games in mind during development?
I mean we've all played Mario Kart on the N64 but it's a very different UI (user experience) with the tilt and tap controls. It is straightforward downhill soapbox racing. We built something for the play patterns and usability of the touchscreen generation rather than imitate something else out there.

Obviously players are going to compare this Angry Birds game to its predecessors. Did you find it difficult to produce something that's going to live up to the franchise's past successes?
I don't think we did. We're going in a very different direction. It's a non-slingshot gameplay pattern — but there are similarities in terms of the characters, humour and mayhem and there's some physics involved. We felt comfortable producing what we thought is the right game for today's audience's gameplay patterns, rather than replicate what we did with Angry Birds' earlier slingshot games.

Candy Crush is one of the biggest hits at the moment. What has this game got over the current competition?
It's the best casual racing game out there. It's the most polished and approachable, with a wide-reaching appeal. Unlike Candy Crush, we're not going for middle-aged women. We're going for tweens and above — the gamer generation.

Angry Birds Go! is the latest installment in the avian franchise. CONTRIBUTED

Publishing

Oprah taps The Invention of Wings as next book pick

Oprah Winfrey GETTY IMAGES

When Oprah tells people to read a book, they listen. She has the power to make a new release with one endorsement. So what book can you expect to see flying off the shelves in 2014? Her latest pick: The Invention of Wings by Secret Life of Bees author Sue Monk Kidd.

The story is set in the early 1800s and is about a complex relationship between two women: Hetty, a slave who lives with a wealthy family in Charleston and dreams of escaping; and Sarah, a white daughter of privilege who is given Hetty for her 11th birthday.

EMILY LAURENCE/ METRO WORLD NEWS

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New Zealand singer Lorde poses in New York City on Nov. 8. VICTORIA WILL/INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pope, Lorde get MTVU nods

Year-end honours. College channel names its man and woman of the year, saying both challenged followers with unexpected stands

MTV's college channel has gone in two wildly different directions in naming Pope Francis and pop singer Lorde as its man and woman of the year.

MTVU said Tuesday that both figures challenged their followers with unexpected stands. Since becoming pope, Francis has urged the Catholic Church not to become obsessed with "small-minded rules" and to emphasize compassion over condemnation in dealing with touchy topics like abortion, gays and contraception.

The New Zealand teenager Lorde released a debut single, Royals, that puts down a culture of conspicuous consumption, and distributed it first for free.

Last year, MTVU honoured Frank Ocean and Malala Yousafzai. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The Word

Tila Tequila takes a turn for the worse

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Last year, Tila Tequila was rushed to the hospital for some terrible reason or another (news sites said it was either a brain aneurysm, a drug overdose or a suicide attempt). Radar Online claimed a brain aneurysm made her "think irrationally" and ingest "two bottles of unspecified heavy prescription drugs." Sources told Radar Online that as a result of whatever happened, she probably suffered "permanent brain damage."

Well, that alleged brain damage may have been on display early Monday morning with the faded reality TV star posting some crazy-pants rants on Facebook (over 12 in a 24-hour period). So crazy, it is hard to write about it in a sensible manner.

"I never said I hated anyone, but just because I feel sympathy, compassion, and forgiveness for others such as Hitler means I am now a monster? All for trying to open your eyes to the truth that Hitler was NOT as bad as he was painted out to be?" she wrote. She then posted a photo to prove that "EVERY ETHNIC PERSON WAS INVOLVED IN WWII… NOT JUST GERMAN PEOPLE!" See? Crazy.

"Blacks, Asians, Jews, Middle Easterners and so on… ALL WERE NAZIS!!! But did you ever hear about this? NO! Because the Zionist Cabal doesn't want you to know the truth but I will speak the truth for GOD since NO ONE ELSE HAS THE BALLS TO!"

Well then!

Crazy online ranting is nothing new to Tequila this week. Over the weekend, she first raised eyebrows when she blamed Paul Walker's death on a "ritualistic murder" rather than what it was — a tragic car accident.

"I believe I am the only person on this entire planet who knows what happened I have just kept my mouth shut because there is a lot more to it and of course ... cases like this," Tila wrote about the mysterious case of Elisa Lam, a 21-year-old University of British Columbia student whose body was found in a water tank at a downtown Los Angeles hotel this year.

She then equated that death with Walker's. "I just did not want to draw any attention to myself but I know exactly why they did it and yes it was indeed a ritualistic murder. Just like Paul Walker's."

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Harry and hook-up hang out in Hell's Kitchen

Maybe Harry Styles and Kendall Jenner were looking for an under-the-radar place to hang out, but a gay bar in New York City clearly wasn't it. After Styles' Saturday Night Live performance with One Direction, he and his rumoured girlfriend had a busy night of party-hopping, stopping for a bit at Hell's Kitchen gay bar Therapy, according to E! News. A source says Styles and Jenner "were having a great time" and "for sure looked like they were a couple. They had a blast." The fact that Styles is 19 and Jenner is 18 — and the drinking age in the U.S. is 21 — didn't seem to factor into their having a blast.

Harry Styles. ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Katy Perry

Perry pans parents' presidential politics

Katy Perry tries to not let politics come between her and her conservative parents — except when an invitation to Barack Obama's inauguration is involved. "My parents are Republicans, and I'm not," she tells Marie Claire. "They didn't vote for Obama, but when I was asked to sing at the inauguration, they were like, 'We can come.' And I was like, No, you can't. I love you so much, but that — on principle.' They understood, but I was like, 'How dare you?' in a way."

Bradley Cooper

Suki stays (sort of) silent about celeb squeeze

Bradley Cooper and girlfriend Suki Waterhouse made their first official appearance together as a couple at the American Hustle premiere party in New York this weekend, according to TMZ.

While they've been spotted out and about before, both have worked hard to keep mum about the relationship "because it's boring," Waterhouse recently told Elle U.K. "I'm not one of those girls who goes on about their boyfriends. I do think whatever I say will sound weird. But the truth is, if I start talking about him, I probably won't be able to stop."

B-lister brings beau to Bel Air

It looks like Courteney Cox may have found some new romance for the holidays with Snow Patrol's Johnny McDaid, according to Life & Style. McDaid accompanied Cox to Jennifer Aniston's Bel Air holiday party in November and wasn't shy about her feelings.

"Courteney definitely looked like she was on a date," a source says. "They were holding hands during the party." Cox's ex-husband, David Arquette, let slip during a chat with Howard Stern on Oct. 31 that she was dating someone new after splitting from Cougar Town co-star Brian Van Holt. "She's with someone who loves and cares for her," Arquette said. "That's all I care about."

Courteney Cox

WHY CAN'T STREET KIDS JUST GET A LIFE?

We've all asked that question before at some point when walking by a street kid. Why can't they just get off the street? Why can't they grow up and take some responsibility by going to school and getting a job? Well, imagine being that street kid for a second. Getting a life is not a simple snap of the fingers. It isn't easy to just get a job or an education. And they can't always just go home. For street kids, every day is survival. Their life is based on simply getting through it. Finding food and shelter is their job, and even overcoming that doesn't put them in any kind of position to find stability in their lives. Getting off the street is just the beginning. So let's start from the beginning. We'll call this kid Steve. Steve's day starts at sunrise in a public park. The sun hits him dead in the eye and he wakes up shivering. This morning, Steve's exhausted and he needs to get out of the wind. He scours the alleyways in his area and finally settles on one. It seems perfect and he can't remember why he doesn't sleep there more often. He finds a spot, puts his head down and begins to doze off. The sounds of the city fade. He falls asleep. He dreams. In this fleeting moment, everything is OK. He's in his old home, in a warm bed, everyone's calm and there's breakfast waiting for him when he decides to – "Get up, kid," says the police officer standing over Steve. Steve opens his eyes as the officer informs him that he needs to clear out immediately. Steve rubs his eyes. Now he remembers the problem with this alleyway. He stands, picks up his things and starts his day again. Steve can't stop thinking about his dream. But that's all it was. Nothing like his actual life at home. He can still feel the pain from his father's fists. Hear his mother's screams. Steve manages to snap back into reality, but reality isn't any better. At least it isn't winter yet. The very thought of spending all winter on the street sends chills down Steve's spine. There have been days when the shame has been too much, when Steve tried to find a way out. Steve recalls a day a few months earlier when he had gotten enough food and rest. So, he wanted to do what so many strangers have told him to do before – get a job. Steve was walking down the street when he noticed a convenience store with a "Help Wanted" sign in front of it. Steve took a deep breath and walked into the store. He went straight to the cashier at the front and asked about the sign. The owner told Steve that he sees him on the streets every day. That he must have been insane to think anyone would hire a stupid, lazy homeless kid. Steve slunk out and glanced back behind him at the "Help Wanted" sign. He didn't understand why no one would give him a chance. He doubted himself to the point where he began to wonder if he would even be able to trust the person who did. Steve hears a car's honk that snaps him back to an all too familiar reality. He's out of money again. He has no place to go. He feels physically and mentally beaten. And soon it will be nightfall. Soon he'll have to do it all over again. This is just a glimpse into Steve's struggle and the struggle that so many homeless youth face. There is no living, only surviving. And when you're trying to survive on the street, every little thing is an obstacle. Every time you beg for change, every time you go to the bathroom, every time you want to sleep, eat or drink – nothing comes easy. For many kids like Steve who want a way out, the struggle to meet basic needs is only the beginning. The coming days, weeks and months provide hurdles even harder to overcome. The physical pain may lessen in leaving the street behind but the mental anguish is constant when trying to forge a new life. Getting an education, applying for a job, admitting that you need counselling – these are hard for anyone. When you have to do all these things from scratch, the frustration can mount as fast as the confidence can fade. From learning how to stay warm in that first winter on the street to the first day back at school, from deciding whether to steal food or pass out from hunger to deciding where to get a shirt to wear for that first job interview, there are endless obstacles for homeless youth.

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You'll love this Cancun resort to the Moon and back

Sun and fun. Winter's icy grip is upon us, might we suggest beaches and bubbly?

GINA ANGELOTTI
Metro World News in New York

Enjoy a cocktail by one of the resort's beautiful pools. PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED/MOON RESORT

Bored of the beach? Try your hand at the golf course.

Moon Palace Cancun is a sprawling all-inclusive waterfront resort minutes from Cancun International Airport. Divided into three sections — Sunrise, Nizuc and Grand — each has its own character, landscape, demographic, restaurants and amenities. Once you put on a guest bracelet at check-in, you're not only given access to these "phases," which while walkable are connected by a lobby-to-lobby bus service, but you're also allowed to visit other Palace properties in the region. With seemingly limitless entertainment and dining options, the real party in Cancun happens here.

As the bellman explained the extensive features of our deluxe room at Grand, it became apparent that this resort was built with newlyweds in mind. With an in-room jacuzzi — standard for all suites — and a furnished patio, our accommodations were quite large for a single person.

But it wasn't long before we took advantage of the cavernous marble shower, swim-suited up and set out for sunshine. While climbing stairs that led to the nearest pool, we almost stepped on one of dozens of sunbathing iguanas that would appear over three days.

Outstretched in a chaise under the shade of palm fronds and umbrellas, the heat was welcome. There were more chairs embedded in a shallow shelf of water along the pool's perimeter, and these prime seats were often occupied.

But when the water gets to be too much, guests will be happy to know that Moon Palace has a spa, two salons and daily yoga in an on-site meditation garden.

Even though it briefly rained each day, the side effects were positive: The loudest guests — mostly families — abandoned the deck, and the ocean breeze rolled in to whip our paperbacks' pages and the napkins under our cocktails du jour.

Wash, rinse, repeat: We pool-hopped like this for the rest of the trip.

One afternoon at the Sunrise pool's coal-fired pizza oven, two newlyweds chit-chatted with other guests in line.

An older woman advised the couple, "It only gets better." Smiling, the husband of the pair responded: "We've been here three days and each one has gotten better."

Just beyond these pools is the quieter beachfront. Although a hefty bit of seaweed clutters the otherwise sea glass-green waters — not on par with the Mayan Riviera's reputation for pristine beaches — the sandbars are the glorious temperature of bathwater and the sand itself is the softest we've bared our feet for.

Each time we walked the shoreline between the phases, we shuffled through heart after heart etched in the sand. We eventually caved and drew one, too.

"Have you ever been kissed by a Mexican?" asked Miguel, a trainer at Moon Palace's own dolphinarium, where guests get a show and a wet smooch from one of eight bottlenose dolphins. A professional photographer on hand means that guests take home a souvenir portrait that's a step up from a smartphone selfie.

On the last evening of the trip, we had an unexpectedly exceptional meal at Los Tacos.

At the poolside snack bar, surrounded by a ring of romantic canopied beds and mangroves, a flirtatious waiter brought to our table a heaping plate of nachos that we didn't actually order. But it didn't matter, because the tortilla chips swimming in cheese, grilled pork and pineapples were as gratifying as the tumbler of Dos Equis we washed them down with.

For the kids

- While there are hoards of honeymooners — Moon Palace hosts more than a thousand weddings annually — the resort is actually bursting at the seams with families. The appeal is as strong for the under-18 set as it is for grown-ups. Parents relax poolside while their kids roam independently with minimal risk, and vice-versa. Plus, the all-inclusive element means that, cost-wise, parents don't need to utter the dreaded word "no" very often. Kids seem elated; adults look relieved.

On a sunny day, when the Grand Canal is a sparkling ribbon of aquamarine embossed with boats ancient and modern, Venice can steal your heart. And it can do a number on your wallet, too. Knocking back a Bellini at the Hemingway haunt of Harry's Bar will cost you. And taking a gondola ride? You don't want to know how much. But here are five things to do in La Serenissima — as the serene city is sometimes called — that don't cost a dime, or a pound of flesh.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

5 Free things in Venice

The Square

Centrally located, St. Mark's Square — Piazza San Marco — is lined with shops and restaurants and is a must-see. Go early or late to avoid the worst crowds. You can go into the church for free, although there are fees to see the museum and other areas. Completely free: window shopping, people-watching and posing for selfies.

The Bridges

Venice is brimming with bridges. The Rialto, a stone arch lined with shops that crosses the Grand Canal at about the halfway point, is the most famous. The Academy Bridge — Ponte dell' Accademia — between the Campo di San Vidal and Campo della Carita, also offers great views of the Grand Canal.

The Ghetto

The word ghetto originated in Venice where a gated part of the city was designated as the Jewish quarter from the 16th century until 1797. A commonly cited explanation is that the word stems from an Italian word "getto" associated with an old foundry in the area. A bas relief sculpture by Arbit Blatas in the main square — Campo di Ghetto Nuovo in the Cannaregio district — commemorates the deaths of Venetian Jews killed in the Second World War.

The Basilica

The Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute — St. Mary of Health — was built after an outbreak of the plague in 1630. Its ornate dome is a feature of the city skyline. Works inside include art by Tintoretto and Titian. Located in the Dorsoduro district, across the Grand Canal from St. Mark's; take the No. 1 water bus to the Salute stop. Open 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. most days.

The Music Museum

Classical music enthusiasts will enjoy the Museum of Music — Museo della Musica — a collection of instruments from the 17th to 19th centuries. The museum is in the Church of St. Maurizio, about a 15-minute walk from St. Mark's Square, and celebrates Venice's history as a centre of instrument making. Open daily 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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Metro's travel myth busting

Travel myths are like urban legends — there are lots of them and nobody really knows how they got started. Luckily, Metro's resident travel expert Loren Christie is here to set the record straight.

ON THE MOVE
Loren Christie
life@metronews.ca

Want to fly first class? Just ask!

Myth: Ask nicely and you'll get upgraded to first class.

Reality: Sorry, you need more than manners to get seated with the pretty people. When it comes to upgrades, loyalty pays. With cost structures and loyalty programs in place, airlines reserve upgrades to first class to a very select few, such as passengers cashing in program points and higher-tier frequent fliers.

Travel deal Tuesdays

Myth: Tuesdays are the best days to buy airfare.

Reality: Historically, many airlines released fare sales on Tuesdays, which has led to this best day to buy myth, but the Internet jolted this pattern. When you fly is far more important than when you buy. Try flexible-dates shopping to determine when you can get the very best deal and go at mid-day and other off-peak business travel hours.

Calm down, it's just a card!

Myth: Your hotel key card can be used to steal your identity.

Reality: A hotel key card never has your personal information, such as your name, photo, or credit card number, attached to it. Even after you've checked out of the hotel, nobody can use it to pull any personal data. If you lose your hotel key card during your stay, you're simply locked out of your room. The misplaced card is simply deactivated and becomes useless.

Being late to the party pays

Myth: Booking at the last minute gets you the best deals.

Reality: More often than not, travellers will pay a premium if they choose to book an airline ticket at the very last minute. You should try to book your airfare at least 21 days in advance. For hotels, you could get a good deal last minute but it is all about the supply and demand; there is no secret formula. There are some deals to be had by booking a last minute, prepackaged vacation, as long as you are flexible on the actual destination.

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Gone fishin' — in a tiny Quebec town

Put the cod on ice.
River turns into a town of fishing huts when the temperature drops

Sainte-Anne-de-la-Perade welcomes tens of thousands of visitors each year to fish tommycod in the Sainte-Anne River. THE CANADIAN PRESS

A fish tale that began 75 years ago has turned a small Quebec town into an international winter destination.

Today, Sainte-Anne-de-la-Perade boasts that it's the world capital for tommycod fishing as it welcomes tens of thousands of visitors annually.

As the story goes, it began in 1938, when a local grocer went out on the nearby Sainte-Anne River to cut up blocks of ice which he would put into boxes to keep his meat refrigerated.

When he cut through the ice, he noticed small codfish in the river. The word spread and fishing huts soon began springing up every winter, turning part of the river into a small village on ice.

During the early days, because roads were closed during the winter, people came by train to fish and scoop up the tommycod, also known as tomcod. Horse-drawn sleigh carriages were used to bring the eager visitors to the fishing chalets. Steve Massicotte, a town councillor and president of the Sainte-Anne River Outfitters Association, says the wood-heated chalets were originally quite small.

"In the beginning, there were chalets that could accommodate four, six, up to a maximum of eight people," he said in an interview. "Since the '80s, we have chalets that can accommodate 25 to 30 people."

Massicotte says 500 fishing huts are now set up each winter along one-and-a-half kilometres of the Sainte-Anne River and that more than 80,000 eager tourists drop by every year to enjoy the winter fishing.

In one period, during the 1950s and '60s, as many as 1,200 tiny chalets covered the ice on the river. The tommycod fishing season officially starts on Dec. 26 and runs until Feb. 16. Ste-Anne-de-la-Perade is located between Montreal and Quebec City, about a 25-minute drive east of Trois-Rivieres.

"People come from everywhere in the world to fish," Massicotte said, noting that along with Europeans and Russians, much of the clientele comes from China and elsewhere in Asia. "People find it magical, just to be able to walk on a river," he added.

For Massicotte, it's almost like shooting fish in a barrel. "The small fish actually arrive at the beginning of December and there are about 800 million that enter the Sainte-Anne River and leave at the end of February," he said.

Massicotte says finding lodgings nearby should not be a problem. But he cautions to reserve ahead of time. "We have local inns, small bed-and-breakfasts, where people can reserve rooms and we also have hotels and motels that are situated nearby at Trois-Rivieres and St-Marc-Des-Carrieres," he added.

"It's important to make reservations because we know that between 80,000 and 100,000 people come through, so places are limited."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"People come from everywhere in the world to fish."
Town councillor Steve Massicotte

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No, it's not a sandwich but a delicious salad with all the ingredients except for the bread. I don't often use iceberg lettuce, but it goes so well in this salad.

You can prepare the salad early in the day and dress just before serving.

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.

2. Combine the milk and egg in one bowl. Combine the panko, Parmesan, and salt and pepper in another bowl.

3. Dip the chicken breast in the egg mixture, then the panko mixture.

4. Heat a small skillet until hot. Add the oil and sauté the chicken breast just until browned on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Place in a 400 F oven and bake for 10 minutes, until the temperature reaches 165 F or until it's no longer pink. Let cool, then slice thinly.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup 2% milk
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup panko crumbs or unseasoned dry breadcrumbs
- 2 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
- pinch of salt and pepper
- 8 oz boneless chicken breast
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 oz prosciutto
- 1 large iceberg lettuce cut into 6 wedges
- 1/2 cup feta cheese
- 1/2 cup diced tomatoes
- 2/3 cup light ranch dressing (store bought)

Nutritional information

Per serving

- **Calories.** 220
- **Carbohydrates.** 11.5 g
- **Fibre.** 0.7 g
- **Protein.** 17.3 g
- **Total fat.** 10 g
- **Saturated fat.** 3.5 g
- **Cholesterol.** 78 mg

5. Meanwhile, in a small skillet, cook the prosciutto until crisp (about 5 minutes). Dice and sprinkle over the lettuce wedges and sprinkle with the crumbled feta and tomatoes. Add chicken.

6. Pour the dressing over top. **THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN**

BLT Salad

This recipe serves six. MIKE MCCOLL, FROM THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

Drink of the Week

Sapphire In a Pear Tree

This drink, inspired by the 12 Days of Christmas, is perfect for holiday parties.

- 1 1/2 oz Bombay Sapphire gin
- 1/2 oz Disaronno amaretto
- 2 oz pear nectar
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 oz maple syrup
- 1 rosemary sprig and cranberries for garnish

Starting from bottom of rosemary sprig, remove approximately two thirds of leaves. Crush leaves to release aroma. Add, along with all other ingredients, into cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake well. Strain into highball glass filled with fresh ice. Garnish with rosemary sprig and cranberries. **COURTESY TROY GILCHRIST/ BOMBAY SAPPHIRE**

The comfort of Mac & Cheese

1. Position a rack toward the bottom of your oven so mac and cheese can bake evenly in the middle. Heat oven to 200 C (400 F) and turn on convection fan if you have one. Lightly oil a large baking dish.

2. Fill your largest pot with lots of hot water and lots of salt and put it over lots of heat. Bring to a boil and cook noodles.

3. While you wait, prepare breadcrumb topping. Fill food processor with bread and choice of herb. Pulse until coarse, even crumbs are formed, just a few seconds. With the food processor running, splash in olive oil, processing just long enough to evenly combine the works. Don't grind crumbs too finely — the coarser the crumbs, the crispier they'll be once baked.

4. Begin sauce by putting bacon in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Splash in enough water to just barely cover it. Stir frequently with a wooden spoon. As the water simmers, the bacon will begin to cook. Then, as the water evaporates, the bacon will render, releasing its fat. Lastly, it will crisp as the flavourful bacon fat heats past the boiling point of water into the flavour zone. Adjust heat as needed, keeping bacon sizzling but not smoking and burning. Stir until the bacon is evenly cooked and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon bits to paper towels, leaving the fat behind for building the sauce.

5. Add onions and garlic to hot bacon fat; sauté as textures soften and flavours brighten, 5 minutes or so. Evenly sprinkle flour over onions, then stir it in well. The bacon fat will absorb the flour and create a thick paste. Continue cooking, getting rid of the raw flour taste, just a minute or two. Whisking constantly, pour in milk and cream, then gently stir as sauce thickens, about 10 minutes.

6. When noodles are al dente, drain and return to pot. To finish sauce, smoothly stir in mustard, paprika, hot sauce and salt, then mix in cheese and bacon bits. Pour sauce over hot, steamy noodles and stir mixture together.

7. Pour into prepared baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with seasoned breadcrumbs. Transfer to oven, reduce temperature to 180 C (350 F) and bake until lightly golden brown and bubbly, about 30 minutes. **THE CANADIAN PRESS/BACK TO BASICS: 100 SIMPLE CLASSIC RECIPES WITH A TWIST BY MICHAEL SMITH (PENGUIN).**

Ingredients

Breadcrumb Topping
- 1/2 loaf Italian bread, torn or cut into chunks
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) of your favourite dried herb such as thyme
- Few splashes of olive oil

Mac and Cheese
- 500 g (1 lb) penne
- 12 slices of bacon, chopped
- 2 onions, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 150 ml (2/3 cup) all-purpose flour
- 1 l (4 cups) milk
- 250 ml (1 cup) whipping cream
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) Dijon mustard
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) paprika
- 5 or 10 ml (1 or 2 tsp) hot sauce
- 5 ml (1 tsp) salt
- 500 g (1 lb) aged cheddar cheese, shredded

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Appetizer. Retro Ham Salad Sandwiches

These sandwiches make a great addition to a sandwich tray for an old-fashioned tea party.

1. In bowl, stir ham, cheese, pickles, mayonnaise, green onions, capers and mustard.

2. Lay three slices of bread flat on work surface. Using rolling pin, slightly flatten one slice. Divide ham salad among the three slices, including the flattened one. Using back of spoon, spread ham mixture evenly over slices. Top each un-flattened slice with another slice of bread and cut into small squares to make little sandwiches. Starting at short end, roll flattened slice of bread up into a coil and slice crosswise to make pinwheel sandwiches. Arrange pinwheel and little sandwiches on a platter. **COURTESY PRESIDENT'S CHOICE**

Ingredients

- 6 oz (175 g) Black Forest ham, chopped
- 1 cup (250 ml) PC World of Flavours Canadian Triple Cheddar Shredded Cheese Blend
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) chopped dill pickles
- 3/4 cup (175 ml) mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp (25 ml) minced green onions
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) chopped drained capers
- 1 tsp (5 ml) Dijon mustard
- 1 pkg (250 g) PC Tramezzini White Crustless Bread

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Networking's network. Another acquaintance has added you on LinkedIn, but you're still not sure what the whole site is about. Here's a crash course on this computer-based career consultant

CLARE TATTERSALL
TalentEgg.ca

LinkedIn is a great tool for researching prospective careers, building your network and reaching out and connecting with people

This should be an entirely professional social media tool, so keep your personal life out of it — it should function as an online resumé and professional networking tool.

It takes some time and effort to create a great LinkedIn account, but if you do it right, it will certainly help you in connecting with the right people and getting a job.

Here are some tips on how to set up an effective LinkedIn profile:

Getting started

Get a professional headshot done. You want to be dressed in business attire and looking sharp. This is about creating a positive and professional image — think about what message your photo sends about you and whether it fits with your career goals.

Take time to write a clear, concise and compelling summary statement. Tailor it to what your target audience will be interested in knowing about you. Be sure to include key words, industry-specific lingo and job-specific skills so that it is easily searchable.

Commit to regularly updating and improving your LinkedIn profile: this way you won't neglect it. ISTOCK

Create an effective and informative professional headline.

This helps people to understand, in just a few words, who you are and what your skills are.

Filling it in

Join groups that relate to your career interests and industries. Being involved in groups can help you to connect with people that you might not otherwise interact with.

Add industry relevant skills to your profile. Once you have added these skills, start endorsing others for the skills that they possess. This will, in turn, result in others endorsing you.

Similar to endorsements, the process of getting recommendations is founded in reciprocity.

If you want others to write a recommendation for you, first write a recommendation for them. Take time to write serious and thoughtful recommendations, as they are also a reflection of you.

When you write a recommendation for someone else, they are then prompted to return the favour and write one for you.

Endorsements and recommendations add to your credibility.

Fine-tuning

- Customize your profile URL — go to your profile, click on Edit, click on Manage Public Profile Settings, on the right hand side of that page, click on Customize your public profile URL. This allows you to create a shorter URL that looks better and more professional on contact cards and resumes.
- Carefully proofread your entire profile. Then, have at least one or two other people look over your profile; ask them to give you feedback on whether it is clear and accurate.

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Schools get a signal. Zuckerberg, Gates foundations donate to effort to bring high-speed Internet access to schools

Ella Russell, 7, works on an e-book on an iPad during her second grade class at Jamestown Elementary School in Arlington, Va.

JACQUELYN MARTIN / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Needed to keep a school building running these days: Water, electricity — and broadband.

Interactive digital learning on laptops and tablets is replacing traditional textbooks in many cases. Students are taking computer-based tests instead of fill-in-the bubble exams. Teachers are accessing far-off resources for lessons.

Technology is changing the way students are taught — and tested. But there's a catch — most of it is occurring in schools that have rich connectivity to the Internet.

Although nearly every school has Internet access, classrooms frequently are not connected or the connections are super slow.

The hurdle is limited capacity inside schools to transmit data, or bandwidth.

"It's the backbone. We have to actually think not just about the sustainability of the current traffic, we're talking about exploding traffic," said Raj Adusumilli, assistant superintendent for information services in the Arlington Public Schools in northern Virginia.

The effort to get high-speed Internet access in every school got a boost last week from the philanthropy of two technology gurus — Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates. Zuckerberg's Startup: Education and Gates' foundation have contributed a combined $9 million US to the non-profit EducationSuperHighway, a San Francisco-based non-profit working to improve connectivity in schools.

"When schools and teachers have access to reliable Internet connections, students can discover new skills and ideas beyond the classroom," Zuckerberg said in a statement.

The funds are expected to be used to provide technical expertise to schools and use competition to help drive costs down.

It likely would cost billions to get high-speed Internet access to every school in America.

U.S. President Barack Obama this past summer set a goal of having 99 per cent of students connected to high-speed Internet connections within five years.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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How to turn casual chatter into a chance

Know who you are, what you stand for and what value you bring to the table. Having a clear sense of your personal brand gives you confidence to display your strengths, talk about your experience and demonstrate your value.

ISTOCK

Talk turned around.

There's no such thing as useless banter when you're on the hunt for a hot job

TANIA DESA
TalentEgg.ca

Whether you're in an unfamiliar country or steps from home, there are five steps to take if you want to turn a conversation into an opportunity:

Be an awesome listener
Finding opportunities is an active process, just like networking, applying to jobs or marketing yourself in an interview.

However, all of these steps start with good listening skills. You can't learn without new information and you can't acquire any if you're talking about yourself.

Maintain eye contact, acknowledge information with body language and ask follow-up questions based on the information you've just heard.

Test your listening skills by thinking about a recent conversation. You'll probably find that it's much easier to recall what you said than what you heard. Get practicing!

Develop curiosity
When you travel, you ask and answer a lot of questions.

There's nothing wrong with that, because questions are a simple and easy way to get to know someone.

However, when you're looking for an opportunity, you want to ask questions that will spark meaningful conversation.

A question is an invitation to engage, so while you're busy not talking, you should be coming up with questions to ignite interest in your conversation partner and build engagement. At the end of the day, great questions sprout from your genuine curiosity and fascination — so questions are a way for you to radiate authenticity and drive a conversation.

Take cues from your conversation partner. If they seem bored with broad questions, get more specific. If you feel lost, don't be afraid to let them choose the next topic.

Be a problem detector
If you listen carefully and pose engaged questions, you will soon find yourself immersed in a lively discussion.

Once you've moved beyond questions and answers, your conversation partner will likely share things they wouldn't have disclosed to you a handful of minutes earlier — not secrets or confidential information, but personal feelings about challenges they're facing or areas of particular interest that they'd like to develop.

Identify problems by listening for hints, remarks or statements like:

"I wish I could ... " "The problem is ... " "I'm not sure how to ... "

When these statements come up, dig deeper to understand the underlying problem and ask yourself how your skills could help address the issue at hand. Sometimes, your help can be an anecdote, a story or information from an article you read. At other times, the solution may just be YOU. Then, it's on to step four.

Don't get discouraged if you can't identify a problem right away. Concentrate on acquiring more information and asking good questions.

Showcase your personal brand
This is the big step.

Once you've spotted your potential opportunity and confirmed that it matches your skills and experience, it's time to make your move.

If the conversation you're having is quite lively and informal, you can say something direct:

"I have some experience in this area."

"Have you considered ... "

"Can I share my thoughts on this?"

If you're afraid of coming on too strong, try an indirect approach. Share a relevant personal story that offers some problem-solving solutions and demonstrates your skills. You can also get your conversation partner to explain the problem in more detail by asking further questions, which may prompt them to ask for feedback from you.

Follow up fearlessly
Even the most promising conversation won't lead to a real opportunity without follow-up.

Make sure you've got some way of staying in touch with your new contact once you part ways.

TALENTEGG.CA IS CANADA'S LEADING JOB SITE AND ONLINE CAREER RESOURCE FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES.

Communication concentration

Take cues from your conversation partner. If they seem bored with broad questions, get more specific. If you feel lost, don't be afraid to let them choose the next topic.

TalentEgg asks:

#Questionofthe-Day: Is sending a thank-you note after an interview a DO or a DON'T?

- @jessihutcheson: Total do! Hand written is best!
- @Haskayne_Jobs: Definitely a DO!
- @Recruit_Campus: 100% DO! If everyone else does (most DO) & you don't, what impression are you giving?
- @jessihutcheson: Or if no one else does and you do - what impression are you giving #alwaysagoodidea
- @samboucher24: Do! even an email goes a long way
- @voiceofjamesd: Be original, send an old fashioned card or a brief video message, rather than just an email thankyou

CONSUMERS COVET CARDS

With the holiday shopping season in full swing, the Retail Gift Card Association (RGCA) recently released the results of the Holiday Gift Card Trend Tracker Survey, which examines how consumers plan to give and receive gift cards from retail locations this holiday season. The results, based on responses from nearly 3,000 consumers, reveal ways that retailers can best capitalize on consumer's continued satisfaction with the products.

According to the survey, 74 per cent of respondents plan to give one or more gift cards this holiday season, and nearly 30 per cent surveyed noted they planned on giving five or more gift cards.

Overall, the number of gift cards consumers plan to purchase as gifts this year increased by 71 per cent, according to survey results.

"There is no longer a question that retail gift cards are the most coveted gift to give and get during the holidays, but consumers are being more deliberate about which cards they purchase, with 73 per cent spending less on holiday spending than they did last year," says Jennifer Tramontana, spokesperson for the Retail Gift Card Association. "This survey shows ways that retailers can compete for savvy consumer dollars by adding holiday promotions and offering online and mobile gift card options such as e-gift codes."

Additional insights from the survey include:

• Gift cards drive store traffic — 78 per cent of consumers plan to spend their cards at the retailer's brick and mortar location.

• Restaurants and department stores will benefit most from gift card promotion this holiday — consumers are most likely to give cards from these types of retailers (57 per cent plan on giving a restaurant gift card this year), and they most want to receive cards from these businesses as well (60 per cent hope for a department store gift card).

• Convenience and practicality drive the decision to give gift cards — 79 per cent of consumers give gift cards because they know the recipient can purchase what they want, and 70 per cent give them for convenience.

• Consumers are embracing more online and mobile options — 56 per cent planned to stay home and shop on Cyber Monday, and 83 per cent like the option to send physical gift cards or e-codes.

• Promotions drive gift cards sales — 17 per cent of consumers wait for a promotion before buying a gift card, and 23 per cent almost always look for promotions at competing retailers before deciding where to buy a gift card.

– Metro News Services

PUT AN END TO 'FESTIVE FAKERY'

Survey results released show that a large majority (77 per cent) of Canadians have committed "festive fakery" — the act of pretending to like a bad gift. The survey, commissioned by Boston Pizza, also found that 80 per cent have witnessed someone pretending to like a bad gift, and some of those who do pretend use some crafty methods to disguise their true feelings.

To eliminate the need for fake reactions, consider a gift card, as 75 per cent of Canadians surveyed would prefer to receive a gift card than something they won't like or use.

"This survey shows that every year good people are forced to fake their reactions to bad gifts, and we at Boston Pizza feel it's time to put an end to this festive fakery," says Steve Silverstone, executive vice-president of marketing at Boston Pizza.

The survey, conducted in late November and hosted by Vision Critical, provided some insight in to what motivates Canadians to pretend — 85 per cent of Canadians believe faking is better than hurting the giver's feelings. It also revealed the top methods fakers have used to pretend to like a bad gift:

• 72 per cent hold their smile for as long as possible to seem like they love the bad gift.

• 57 per cent give a hug to avoid having to comment on the gift.

• 56 per cent start using or wearing the gift right away.

• 50 per cent deflect attention to someone else in the room.

• 48 per cent exclaim phrases like "Oh, you shouldn't have!" or "This is too much!"

Once a bad gift is received, some 46 per cent will return or exchange it, 45 per cent admit to re-gifting unwanted presents, and 19 per cent just throw them in the garbage.

– Metro News Services

COLOURBOX

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THE GIFT OF COMFORT AND JOY AT ELMWOOD SPA

An Elmwood Spa gift card could be just the gift you are looking for this holiday season.

Elmwood is the largest spa in Canada with 34 treatment rooms on four floors in a landmark historic building in downtown Toronto. There are two licensed restaurants as well as a juice bar.

There is definitely a gift at Elmwood Spa for every budget, with three very special holiday packages available — Sweet Serenity includes a 50-minute aromatherapy massage, three-course spa cuisine lunch and complimentary Serenity Tea gift set for $148; Winter Escape includes a 50-minute Swedish massage, ElmLine essential facial, three-course lunch and complimentary body care gift for $247; and Holiday Bliss includes an 80-minute Swedish massage, ElmLine essential facial and manicure, three-course lunch and complimentary bath gift set for $339.

CONTRIBUTED

Water Therapies™ (the swimming pool, whirlpool and steam rooms) are complimentary with packages and most services. The women's change room has its own whirlpool, white spa robes are provided, and there are cosy nooks and rooms where guests can relax quietly with a cup of tea.

If you prefer to give a specific treatment, there are many to choose from, including facials, manicures and pedicures. Some of the more exotic treatments include a bamboo massage with heated bamboo sticks, and the deep Siam massage, a healing massage that uses a steamed herbal compress to apply deep pressure, for $169 each.

Elwood Spa gift cards are available by dollar value or by retreat packages and specific services. Buy them online, in the spa, or over the phone (the spa will mail the card to you or the recipient).

For more information, please visit elmwoodspa.com or call 416-977-6751.

GIFT CARDS REMAIN A POPULAR CHOICE

Only one in nine brand-specific gift cards charge purchase fees, versus 100 per cent of general-purpose gift cards, according to new research released by Bankrate.com.

Of the 55 widely-held, brand-specific cards that include retailers, restaurants, airlines and gas stations, only three charge a purchase fee to all customers, and three others charge a purchase fee in some instances.

Gift cards have been the most popular gift choice for the past five years, according to the National Retail Federation. Bankrate found that a little more than half of people (53 per cent) prefer general-purpose gift cards. Two-thirds of people who make more than $75,000 per year prefer general-purpose gift cards.

"While most people prefer to receive general-purpose gift cards because they can be used almost anywhere, they should be aware of the fees these cards charge both purchasers and recipients," says Janna Herron, credit card analyst, Bankrate.com. "For example, all of the general-purpose cards that we surveyed charge the purchaser up to $6.95, and 71 per cent charge dormancy or maintenance fees to the recipient. None of the brand-specific cards charge dormancy or maintenance fees."

Additional findings from the survey include:

- Almost two in three people have given a gift card, and more than three in four have received one.
- The most common value of gift cards, both given and received, is between $25 and $50.
- People older than 65 and those between 18 and 29 years old are the least likely to give a gift card.
- 53 per cent of the gift cards that Bankrate.com surveyed can be reloaded, up slightly from 51 per cent last year.

– Metro News Services

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*No purchase necessary. Contest closes January 15, 2014 at 11:59pm. Full contest rules and regulations available online.
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MMA

St-Pierre to dish on future Friday

Georges St-Pierre will shed light on his future later this week in Quebec City.

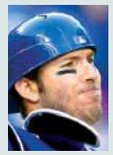
There has been a question mark hanging over the UFC welterweight champion since his win over No. 1 contender Johny Hendricks last month at UFC 167. St-Pierre said after the fight that he needed time away from his sport.

Georges St-Pierre GETTY IMAGES

It appears the 32-year-old from Montreal has made up his mind.

St-Pierre, currently on vacation in Dubai, confirmed by text to The Canadian Press that he will be announcing his future Friday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB



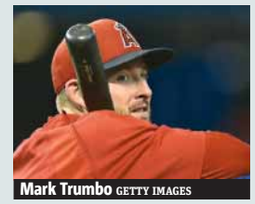
"I know they got a winning team out there for quite some time so that was a big deal to me." Former Blue Jays catcher J.P. Arencibia who finalized a $1.8-million, one-year contract with the Texas Rangers on Tuesday.

MLB

Trumbo highlights jumbo 3-team deal

The Los Angeles Angels, Arizona Diamondbacks and Chicago White Sox pulled off a three-team trade Tuesday.

Outfielder-first baseman Mark Trumbo will go from L.A. to Arizona, pitcher Hector Santiago moves from Chicago to L.A., outfielder Adam Eaton leaves Arizona for Chicago, and left-hander Tyler Skaggs goes from Arizona to L.A.


Mark Trumbo GETTY IMAGES

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Royally puck'd? Revenge in the cards for Kings' visit

NHL. Backstops Bernier, Scrivens could get chance to stick it to former teammates

There is potential for a wonderful matchup in the Maple Leafs-Kings game Wednesday: If Jonathan Bernier starts in goal for Toronto, and Ben Scrivens gets the nod for Los Angeles, it will mark the first time both goalies will face their former teams.

Both acknowledged the significance of the game and the fact motivation will not be a problem.

"We joke as players amongst ourselves and the guys usually say, hey, that's the team that didn't want you," said Leafs defenceman Mark Fraser, who has faced his former team, the New Jersey Devils, several times since becoming a Leaf last season. "And most of the times that's not the truth, but regardless of why they let you go, you want to erase that and show them they are missing out on something."

Scrivens has made an instant impression with the Kings with three shutouts and a league-leading goals-against average since replacing the injured Jonathan Quick.

He said he "never really wanted to leave Toronto," a big factor in a player having a strong performance against a former team.

Leafs defenceman Cody Franson said while players always want to perform well, it's rare to have a true enemy in a former locker-room.

"I wouldn't say you go out there and want to show this guy or that guy that they are (jerks) or anything like that," said Franson, a former Predator.

"But you still want to impress the coaches and management, the people who had control over you, and show there's still a lot more in you."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Captain's ban

"I've taken pride in playing between the rules and doing it the right way, so I'm disappointed."

Leafs captain Dion Phaneuf who was suspended two games on Tuesday for a hit from behind on Kevan Miller of the Bruins on Sunday.

Former Leafs backup goalie Ben Scrivens leads the NHL with a .943 save percentage, is in a first-place tie for with three shutouts and sits second in the league with a 1.56 goals-against average. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

Board of governors

- The league's board of governors gave vice-president of player safety Brendan Shanahan a thumbs up for his handling of discipline on Tuesday in Pebble Beach, Fla. "I believe the sense of the room is that Brendan Shanahan and the department of player safety has the confidence of the board of governors. He certainly has my confidence," commissioner Gary Bettman said.
- Bettman reiterated Tuesday that the NHL has no official expansion plans. It won't happen in the next two seasons, but that hasn't stopped the calls from pouring in. "We're getting lots of expressions of interest, and no decisions have been made to do anything other than listen," Bettman said.
- Markham, Quebec City, and Seattle have shown interest in bringing NHL teams to their respective locations.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Spurs get last laugh as Raptors fade fast

Raptors point guard Kyle Lowry has a laugh after hitting the hardwood against the Spurs on Tuesday. RICHARD LAUTENS/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Led by Manu Ginobili's 16 points, seven Spurs scored in double figures as San Antonio recovered from a slow start to thump the depleted Toronto Raptors 116-103 on Tuesday night.

Toronto (7-13) led by as much as 14 in the first quarter but, with little help available on the bench, faded fast and San Antonio (16-4) pulled ahead as the game wore on.

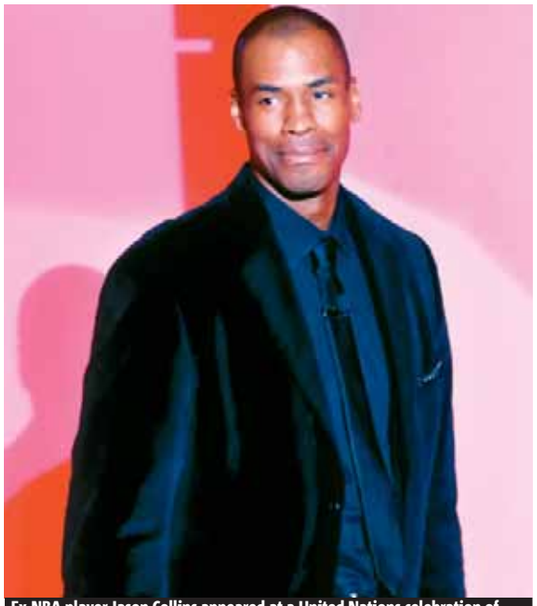
DeMar DeRozan and Amir Johnson led Toronto with 19 points. Tony Parker finished with 15 and Tim Duncan 14 as the Spurs went to their bench early.

Three-point shooting helped the Spurs gain their lead. San Antonio, moving the ball around nicely before going cold late from outside the arc, hit 13 of 23 compared to 10 of 23 for Toronto.

The Raptors were without Greivis Vasquez, Patrick Patterson, John Salmons and Chuck Hayes, acquired Monday in the deal that sent Rudy Gay, Aaron Gray and Quincy Acy to Sacramento. THE CANADIAN PRESS

4 SPORTS

Gay athletes ask IOC, FIFA to take a stronger stand



Ex-NBA player Jason Collins appeared at a United Nations celebration of human rights on Tuesday. FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

Human rights. Collins, Navratilova stop short of calling for Olympic, World Cup boycotts

Ex-NBA player Jason Collins and tennis great Martina Navratilova urged world sports bodies like the International Olympic Committee and FIFA to do more to support gay athletes at a special United Nations event Tuesday celebrating International Human Rights Day.

The two openly gay athletes appeared along with human rights activists at the U.N. events, which focused attention on the upcoming Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Russia passed a law this summer banning homosexual "propaganda." The law has drawn international condemnation and sparked some calls for a boycott.

Navratilova, who lost lucrative endorsements when she came out back in 1981, said she doesn't support any boycotts. But she said the IOC is "putting its head in the sand" and criticized FIFA, the world soccer body, for awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

"Nobody's talking about Qatar and the World Cup. You can get a jail term there," she said of consensual gay sex in the small Persian Gulf nation.

Collins paid his respects to Navratilova, thanking her for coming out back when such a move ended up costing her millions in lost endorsement opportunities.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Outraged at the Kremlin

"To deny gay and lesbians the right to live freely ... is in fact an act of barbarism."

U.S. ambassador Samantha Power slams Russian laws that criminalizes sex between same sex couples at meeting with activists

Sochi 2014. Protesters will get to have their say at Winter Olympics

IOC President Thomas Bach said Russia will set up public protest zones in Sochi during the Winter Olympics, a move unlikely to defuse criticism of the country's human rights record and a recent law banning gay "propaganda."

With the opening ceremony less than two months away, Bach said Sochi organizers notified him of the decision during their report to the International Olympic Committee executive board on Tuesday.

Bach, chairing his first board meeting since being elected president in September, said the Russians would establish specially designated zones for "people who want to express their opinion or want to demonstrate for or against something."

Bach said he didn't have any details on where the protest zones would be located or how they would be managed during the games, which run from Feb. 7-23.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Figure skating

American Lysacek not going for gold

Evan Lysacek will not defend his Olympic figure skating title in Sochi because of a torn labrum in his left hip.

After two months of aggressive treatment, doctors told Lysacek last week the injury was not going to improve and he was risking permanent damage if he kept training.

"I always thought it would work out," Lysacek said. "I am crushed."

Lysacek said he will have to take time off the ice for the injury to completely heal, and surgery remains a possibility.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soccer. Bendik in, Frei out at Toronto FC

Toronto FC rewarded goalkeeper Joe Bendik with a new deal Tuesday while dealing former starter Stefan Frei to the Seattle Sounders.

Frei, Toronto's longest-serving player, lost his job to injury in 2012 and the fine play of Bendik this season. His $200,000 US contract expired at the end of the season but Toronto retained his rights though Thursday's first stage of the MLS re-entry process.

Frei signed a new contract with Seattle shortly after the trade.

"He (Bendik) is still a relatively young keeper who showed he has the ability and mentality to handle a full season of MLS play," Toronto GM Tim Bezbatchenko said.

"We are excited to watch him continue to develop his skills and be a leader on our re-shaped roster next season." Bendik, 24, started 33 games for Toronto in 2013, finishing with a 6-16-11 record and four shutouts. His salary was listed at $46,500.

Prior to being acquired by Toronto FC, he made five appearances and started in three games for Portland during the 2012 season.

Frei, 27, is Toronto's all-time leader in appearances across all competitions (99). He has a 1.54 goals-against average in 82 regular-season starts.

Toronto receives a conditional 2015 first-round MLS Super-Draft pick from Seattle.

On Monday, Toronto acquired Brazilian midfielder Jackson from FC Dallas in exchange for a conditional second-round pick in the 2015 draft and allocation money.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Getting their goalie

"Joe had an opportunity to step in and prove himself this season and he did so in a big way"

Toronto FC general manager Tim Bezbatchenko discusses the play of netminder Joe Bendik

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NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Boston	30	20	8	2	84	61	42
Montreal	31	19	9	3	85	65	41
Detroit	31	15	9	7	85	82	37
Tampa Bay	29	17	10	2	80	70	36
Toronto	31	16	12	3	86	87	35
Ottawa	31	12	14	5	91	103	29
Florida	31	9	17	5	70	104	23
Buffalo	30	6	22	2	51	91	14

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Pittsburgh	32	21	10	1	98	71	43
Washington	30	16	12	2	92	85	34
NY Rangers	31	15	15	1	69	80	31
Carolina	31	13	13	5	71	86	31
New Jersey	31	12	13	6	69	77	30
Philadelphia	30	13	14	3	68	78	29
Columbus	30	12	15	3	73	82	27
NY Islanders	31	8	18	5	77	109	21

Tuesday's results
Los Angeles at Montreal
Tampa Bay at Washington
Ottawa at Buffalo
New Jersey at Columbus
Nashville at NY Rangers
Detroit at Florida
St. Louis at Winnipeg
Chicago at Dallas
Phoenix at Colorado
Boston at Calgary
Carolina at Edmonton
NY Islanders at San Jose

Monday's results
Ottawa 5 Philadelphia 4 (SO)
Pittsburgh 2 Columbus 1
Anaheim 5 NY Islanders 2
Vancouver 2 Carolina 0

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Chicago	32	21	6	5	116	89	47
St. Louis	28	19	6	3	98	66	41
Minnesota	32	18	9	5	77	75	41
Colorado	28	20	8	0	82	65	40
Dallas	28	14	9	5	81	80	33
Winnipeg	31	14	13	4	82	88	32
Nashville	30	13	14	3	67	88	29

PACIFIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Anaheim	33	21	7	5	106	86	47
San Jose	30	19	6	5	101	75	43
Los Angeles	30	19	7	4	79	62	42
Vancouver	33	18	10	5	88	81	41
Phoenix	29	16	8	5	94	93	37
Calgary	29	11	14	4	78	98	26
Edmonton	31	10	18	3	84	105	23

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern
Los Angeles at Toronto, 7:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Minnesota at Anaheim, 10:30 p.m.

Thursday's games
Montreal at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Columbus at NY Rangers, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Ottawa, 7:30 p.m.
Detroit at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Dallas at Nashville, 8 p.m.
Colorado at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
Carolina at Calgary, 9 p.m.
NY Islanders at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Boston at Edmonton, 9:30 p.m.
Minnesota at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

SCORING LEADERS

	G	A	Pts
Crosby, Pgh	16	27	43
Malkin, Pgh	8	30	38
Getzlaf, Ana	16	21	37
Kane, Chi	16	21	37
Perry, Ana	20	15	35
Tavares, NYI	12	22	34
Steen, StL	20	12	32
Thornton, SJ	5	27	32
Ovechkin, Wash	22	9	31
Kunitz, Pgh	17	14	31
Zetterberg, Det	11	19	30
Kessel, Tor	16	13	29
Couture, SJ	10	19	29
Karlsson, Ott	8	21	29
H. Sedin, Vcr	8	21	29
Ryan, Ott	14	14	28
Marleau, SJ	13	15	28
D. Sedin, Vcr	10	18	28
Seguin, Dal	15	12	27

Not including last night's games

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Indiana	18	3	.857	—
d-Miami	16	5	.762	2
Atlanta	11	10	.524	7
d-Boston	10	12	.455	8½
Detroit	10	11	.476	8
Charlotte	10	11	.476	8
Washington	9	11	.450	8½
Chicago	8	10	.444	8½
Toronto	7	12	.368	10
Cleveland	7	13	.350	10½
Philadelphia	7	15	.318	11½
Brooklyn	6	14	.300	11½
Orlando	6	15	.286	12
New York	5	14	.263	12
Milwaukee	4	16	.200	13½

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	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Portland	18	4	.818	—
Oklahoma City	15	4	.789	1½
d-San Antonio	15	4	.789	1½
d-L.A. Clippers	14	8	.636	4
Houston	15	7	.682	3
Denver	13	8	.619	4½
Dallas	13	9	.591	5
Phoenix	11	9	.550	6
Golden State	12	10	.545	6
Memphis	10	10	.500	7
L.A. Lakers	10	10	.500	7
New Orleans	9	10	.474	7½
Minnesota	9	11	.450	8
Sacramento	6	13	.316	10½
Utah	4	19	.174	14½

d – division leaders

Tuesday's results
San Antonio at Toronto
New York at Cleveland
Miami at Indiana
Minnesota at Detroit
Oklahoma City at Atlanta
Boston at Brooklyn
Milwaukee at Chicago
Phoenix at L.A. Lakers

Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern
Orlando at Charlotte, 7 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
San Antonio at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
Detroit at New Orleans, 8 p.m.
Philadelphia at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Chicago at New York, 8 p.m.
Oklahoma City at Memphis, 8 p.m.
Utah at Sacramento, 10 p.m.
Dallas at Golden State, 10:30 p.m.

Manuel is still the man for Bills

NFL. Despite Tampa trauma, Buffalo keeps faith in under-fire QB

Bills coach Doug Marrone is maintaining his faith and patience in EJ Manuel despite the rookie quarterback's latest dud.

"He has the ability to do it," Marrone said Monday. "There's no doubt in my mind."

That doesn't mean Marrone is anywhere close to being satisfied with Manuel's development, and the lack of consistency the first-round pick out of Florida State has shown in failing to string together one good outing after another.

Manuel's performance is under the microscope a day after a 27-6 loss at Tampa Bay that pushed the Bills (4-9) to the brink of extending the NFL's longest active playoff drought to 14 consecutive seasons.

In dropping to 3-6 on the season, and 0-4 on the road, Manuel went 18 of 33 for 184 yards while throwing four interceptions to double his season total. He led an offence that managed a season-low 214 yards, converted just one of 11 third-down opportunities and crossed midfield just three times.

During a happier moment, QB EJ Manuel celebrates the Bills' win over the Jets on September 29 in Orchard Park, N.Y. GETTY IMAGES

"He did not play well," Marrone said.

And yet when it came to laying blame, the coach noted there was plenty to go around in a game where very little went right for a young team showing signs of regressing in having lost seven of nine.

Two of Manuel's interceptions came on passes that glanced off receivers' hands. Protection was an issue, with Manuel being sacked seven times.

The running game — usually the Bills' strength — was relatively non-existent in managing a season-low 67 yards and led by Manuel, who scrambled five times for 29 yards. Penalties were also an issue, with Buffalo being flagged 11 times for 114 yards.

Add it up and Buffalo, which travels to play Jacksonville (4-9) on Sunday, is assured of finishing its ninth straight season without a winning record.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NFL

Girlfriend hoax still haunts Te'o

Manti Te'o says his rough rookie season has nothing to do with the flack he's faced over getting fooled by a hoax involving a fake girlfriend while at Notre Dame.

The San Diego Chargers rookie linebacker said in his first conference call of the season Tuesday that he has yet to play a complete game in the NFL but that's because of his adjustment to the pros and not because he's distracted in any way by the catcalls from opposing teams or their fans.

Te'o said he does a good job blocking out the chatter from the stands.

When asked a followup question about opponents trying to get under his skin, he did acknowledge that they sometimes bring up the issue.

Te'o was an All-American linebacker whose draft stock fell after his poor showing in the BCS championship game against Alabama. Once the hoax was revealed, front office personnel wondered if he'd be mentally tough enough to handle the grief he'd face over the girlfriend hoax.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soccer. Leverkusen, Olympiakos advance in UEFA Champions League

Olympiakos and Bayer Leverkusen reached the last 16 of the Champions League on Tuesday, with either Juventus or Galatasaray set to join them after their match in Istanbul was abandoned because of a snowstorm.

Match officials stopped play after 31 minutes, ruling the field was too dangerous to play on. The last hour will now be played on Wednesday, kicking off at 8 a.m. (EST).

Olympiakos beat 8-man Anderlecht 3-1 to advance, edging out two-time champion Benfica, whose 2-1 victory over Paris St. Germain was not enough.

Leverkusen won 1-0 at Real Sociedad to finish behind Group A winner Manchester United, which beat Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0.

Cristiano Ronaldo became the first player to score nine times in group play as the Portugal forward's 26th goal of the season helped carry Real Madrid to a 2-0 victory at Copenhagen to wrap up Group B.

Manchester City finally managed to secure a victory over a European heavyweight, coming from behind to win 3-2 at Bayern Munich to end the defending champion's record winning streak at 10 games. City fell one goal shy of taking Group D over Bayern on head-to-head results after the clubs finished tied on 15 points.

Manchester United's Wayne Rooney applauds after his team's 1-0 win over Shakhtar Donetsk. JON SUPER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Back in Manchester, Phil Jones scored in the 67th minute at Old Trafford as United continued to find its form in Europe while it struggles domestically.

United's victory helped Leverkusen, as it condemned Shakhtar to a place in the Europa League after finishing third in the group.

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10 WARD'S Best Interiors

Price for 2013 Dodge Dart GT with optional equipment shown: $23,890.§

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AJAC's historical missteps?

Former winners. Let's go back in time and see the good and the not-so-good victors

THE 2010 VW GOLF GTI, ALL PHOTOS TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The trouble with car-of-the-year awards is that they recognize fetching lines, nifty engineering and value for money, but fail to take into account the one factor shoppers say is paramount to their decision: reliability.

As AJAC names its finalists for the 2014 Canadian car and utility vehicle of the year, we thought it would be instructive to look back at previous winners, in five-year increments, to see how they fared in the real world. Do our esteemed jurists end up picking the best vehicles for hard-working Canadians? You be the judge.

2010: VW Golf GTI

Volkswagen bookends our retrospective with two disparate generations of the worldly, front-drive Golf. The sixth-gen Golf, introduced in 2010, was a masterful reworking of the Mk5 car that landed here in 2006. The body was finessed with an angle grinder to make it more aerodynamic, while the cabin furnishings were raised to near-Audi standards. The GTI inherited Golf's three- and five-door hatch configurations, but with some tuned suspension bits and wicked alloy wheels shod with low-profile rubber. Owners of pre-2010 GTIs did report several minor problems, but VW must have ironed out the bugs; the newest generation appears problem free.

2005: Ford Mustang

To mark the 40th anniversary of Lee Iacocca's groundbreaking Mustang, Ford put stylist J Mays on the job to cast the new coupe and convertible as "retro-future" iterations of the original. By adopting the rear-drive chassis of the Lincoln LS — but with a solid rear axle to keep costs down — the car gained a stiff platform to promote adept handling. Assembled at the Ford-Mazda plant in Michigan, the Mustang benefited from Japanese-quality controls. Still, there were some unsettling problems revealed by owners, including faulty manual transmissions and rear differentials, fuelling issues, faulty emergency brakes, short-lived batteries, bad V8 throttle-position sensors and interior rattles.

The 2005 Ford Mustang had looks and power but also some faults.

2000: Ford Focus

With its avant-garde styling and premium materials, the Ford Focus aspired to be more than just an econobox. And it came in lots of flavours: a four-door sedan, five-door wagon, three-door hatchback and, later, a five-door hatch. Every model was a ball to drive, thanks to its tight platform and sophisticated suspension geometry. The Focus got off to a rocky start in terms of reliability. Owners' mailboxes filled up with recall notices, and the cars exhibited mechanical glitches such as fast-wearing brakes, wheel-bearing failures, broken transmissions and ignition switches, faulty air conditioners, bad fuel pumps and numerous electrical problems.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

This year's 12 finalists

- **Small Car (under $21k):** Mazda 3
- **Small Car (over $21k):** Mazda 3 Sport
- **Family Car (under $30k):** Kia Soul
- **Family Car (over $30k):** Mazda 6
- **Luxury Car (under $50k):** Lexus IS 350 RWD
- **Luxury Car (over $50k):** Infiniti Q50 Hybrid
- **Sports/Performance ($50k+):** Chevrolet Corvette Stingray
- **Prestige Car (over $75k):** Mercedes-Benz S Class
- **SUV/CUV (under $35k):** Jeep Cherokee
- **SUV/CUV ($35k to $60k):** Kia Sorento
- **SUV/CUV ($60k+):** Acura MDX
- **Pickup:** GMC Sierra

The process of election

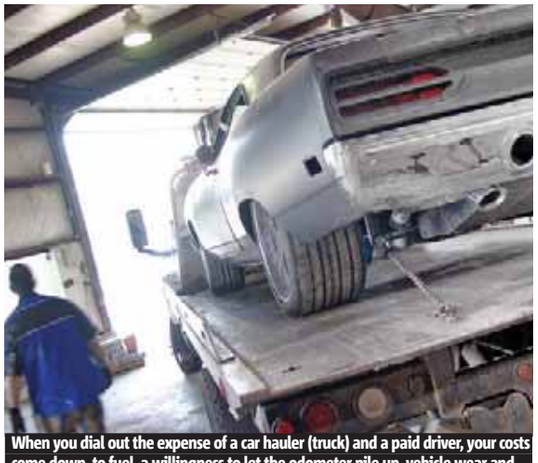
- **AJAC finalists and runners up.** Mazda, Kia and General Motors lead the way in the battle to be named Canada's 2014 car or truck of the year. The Automobile Journalists Association of Canada announced its 12 finalists for the awards last week, including three Mazda vehicles, and two each from Kia and GM. In October, a group of 80 AJAC journalists test drove 174 new vehicles during a week-long series of trials in Niagara Falls. AJAC's annual Test Fest evaluates all new or redesigned vehicles in each of 12 categories on the same day, over the same route, including a high-speed test circuit and/or a simulated off-road course or cottage road, depending on the type of vehicle. The journalists ranked a wide range of attributes, including design, space, quality, performance, safety, economy and value. Transport Canada fuel consumption figures were also factored in, as was the vehicles' price. Those 12 finalists will now compete to be named AJAC's Car of the Year or Utility Vehicle of the Year, which will be announced on Feb. 13.

A moving date heals your automotive heart

Autoknow. Imagine a dating site ... where people who need their cars moved meet people who can move them (cue the violins)

TODD D. BURLAGE
wheelbasemedia.com

You're taking a chance driving an old car, anyway, so putting it in the hands of a total stranger is likely just making things worse. Still, there might be an experienced driver online willing to take on the challenge.



When you dial out the expense of a car hauler (truck) and a paid driver, your costs come down to fuel, a willingness to let the odometer pile up, vehicle wear and tear . . . and trusting a total stranger with your wheels.

James Newman, Sr., needs a ride. Well, actually, his 2010 Ford Escape needs a ride.

Newman, a retired high school teacher, plans to spend the holidays and winter months at his son's home in Phoenix, Ariz., and he needs transportation while he is staying there.

But at 77 years of age, Newman is not up to driving the 3,800 kilometres from Syracuse, N.Y. And on a limited budget, he's not interested in spending about $1,600 US to have his wagon professionally hauled cross-country. Renting a car for three months is also not a financial option.

Facing an unusual vehicle-relocation situation, Newman turned to a transportation solution that he unexpectedly found while surfing the Internet for quotes to have his Escape delivered to him in Arizona; an "auto driveaway" service.

"I didn't know anything about (auto driveaways) until I started researching what it would cost to get my SUV to Arizona," Newman said. "With the cost and convenience, this was the best option. Really, it was the only option for me."

An auto driveaway service essentially works as a barter system that matches people in need of vehicle relocation — but are neither able nor willing to make the drive or pay the high cost of hauling — with a driver in need of a cheap trip to the same city or general location.

The connections between vehicle owner and driver are typically made through a basic "auto driveaway" search on craigslist.org, autotempest.com, searchtempest.com or a similar service-driven website.

Vehicle owners use these websites to post their relocation needs, while potential drivers list their destination wishes. When a location match is made, the parties then work out the specifics of the trip via email.

Newman decided on autotempest.com for his driver search, and he quickly found his candidates: two Columbia University students wanting to get to Mesa, Ariz., for holiday semester break. Newman gave them the work, granted the young men four days to make the trip, and agreed to reimburse all fuel costs when his vehicle arrives in Arizona.

Not bad for the price of a few tanks of gasoline, and for their time and effort, the two college students get free transportation back home for the holidays, though they'll have to find their own way back to New York when classes resume in January.

"There's some risk involved," Newman said of this unconventional relocation option. "But I'm confident there won't be any problems."

Through cash deposits from the drivers, background checks, GPS tracking and common sense, some safeguards can be built in before handing over the keys to somebody you've only met via email. But trusting a total stranger to drive your vehicle for three or four days and deliver it a few thousand kilometres away naturally carries a level of worry and risk.

And that's where companies such as Professional Drivers Incorporated, Custom Auto Delivery and Auto Driveaway are often hired to help steady the nerves of relocation, and still keep costs down.

Quoted

"I didn't know anything about (auto driveaways) until I started researching what it would cost to get my SUV to Arizona. With the cost and convenience, this was the best option. Really, it was the only option for me."

Retired school teacher James Newman Sr.

It's tougher finding drivers traveling to rural areas, but you could have your car driven to a major center and then trucked to your location, wherever that is. ALL IMAGES WHEELBASE

David Smaller, owner-operator of Canada Driveaway, said his business helps match vehicle owners and relocation drivers, most commonly during the winter months when retirees want to fly out of Canada and into warmer climates in the United States, but need to have their cars shipped.

"The owners are our clients and the drivers know they can get a free road trip holiday," Smaller said. "So they plan their trip according to the seasonality."

Smaller's business works out every trip detail from arrival time to travel duration and the vehicle owner pays the fees associated with the service, the fuel and the compensation of the driver, which is typically not more than $500, Smaller said.

"This is kind of a niche market but there is steady demand for the service this time of year . . . It's enough to keep us busy but not enough for us to get rich."

Jill Pixley writes a travel blog for the popular freelance website examiner.com and she said the Internet is helping to drive the growing popularity of the auto driveaway service.

Pixley reported that through this barter method of vehicle relocation, the company Auto Driveaway alone provided transportation for about 10,000 travelers in more than 8,000 vehicles just last year.

For the sake of research for a blog story on an auto driveaway, Pixley volunteered to drive a Toyota Camry from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles. The only eligibility requirements for the job were an online application through Auto Driveaway, a valid operator's license, a clean driving record and a $350 deposit to be refunded upon vehicle delivery.

"The advantage was that I got to roll through 10 states on someone else's dime," wrote Pixley, who agreed to pay for her own fuel on the trip. "I also had the freedom to leave the huge interstates behind and follow my own route along secondary roads and highways."

Pixley explained that an auto driveaway service is a great relocation option for those wanting to avoid hauling costs. But logistical problems can be difficult to overcome, especially in smaller cities and towns where matching an available driver at Point A with a desire to travel to a very specific Point B can take some negotiation.

But at least for Mr. Newman, using an auto driveaway to move his vehicle cross-country for only the price of fuel easily outweighed any potential inconvenience or obvious risks.

"I suppose there is some worry involved, nothing is guaranteed," he said. "But if you do your research and take the time to find the right drivers, this seems like a great way to go. I hope it is, anyway."

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2013 F-150 Platinum 4x4 model shown

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No more 'rim' shots

Scuffing your expensive alloy wheels — commonly referred to as "curb rash" — can ruin the looks of your otherwise pristine vehicle. One way to protect yourself from such occurrences is to install a set of Rimskins. When fitted along the wheel's outer lip (they're adhesive backed), Rimskins offers a significant measure of curb-rash protection, and if one should become too damaged to continue service you just put another one on. (They'll also cover up old damage). A single-wheel Rimskins kit available in silver, red, black, white or blue sells for $25 US and are good for wheels up to 20-inches in diameter. Or you can order a five-pack of Rimskins in the colours of your choice for $100. For information and ordering go to rimskins.com.

Fast food dishes

For fueling up your kids, The Busted Knuckle Garage has a few interesting items. The specialty auto-accessories company has come up with a children's five-piece tableware set that's made of "unbreakable" Melamine. Displaying the appropriate Busted Knuckle racing designs, each kit comes with a three-section 20-centimetre dinner plate, 12-centimetre bowl, six-ounce cup plus a fork and a spoon. The entire serving set is packaged in an attractive gift box. The best part is the Busted Knuckle folks have reduced the price for each set to $16 US from $20. Pick them up at bustedknucklegarage.com

Belt yourself up

We all now that seatbelts save lives, but did you know that a seatbelt belt from Buckle-Down could possibly save you from the embarrassment of inadvertently dropping your drawers? You can choose from a variety of authentic-looking, one-size-fits-all belts for 24 to 38-inch waists and their 3.8-centimetre (1.5-inch) width will fit most pant loops. You can select from various officially licensed brands such as Chevrolet (including Corvette), Pontiac, Cadillac, Ford (Mustang and Ford truck), Chrysler, Dodge (Ram and Viper), to name a few. And if you're worried about accessorizing, there are 20 different colours to choose from. Prices start at $23 US. Make your selection(s) at beltsdirect.com.

An off-the-cuff gift

Even gearheads will doff their jeans and T-shirts and get dressed up once in a while. If you're one of 'em, why not add a pair of silver speedometer-and-fuel-gauge cufflinks from Cuff-Daddy to your wardrobe. Each set features a racing-inspired and authentic-looking 16-millimetre diameter (0.625-inch) speedometer and a fuel gauge. They also have an acrylic coating for lasting protection and are covered by Cuff-Daddy's lifetime warranty. The $30 US price (including shipping within the United States) includes a hard-sided presentation box. To order, go to cuff-daddy.com (type the keyword speedometer into the search window).

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Trying to decide on that new lease on life?

Q&A. Take the test to see if renting long term fits you?

Leasers will often get a better car than those who finance. NEWS CANADA

There are many factors to consider when deciding if leasing a vehicle is the best option. You'll need to consider your lifestyle, driving habits and financial circumstances before making any decisions.

For some initial insights, Chevrolet Canada gives us the right questions to ask alongside some valuable information:

What are the financial benefits of leasing?
Only the depreciation value of the vehicle is used to calculate monthly payments in comparison to the full price of the vehicle used in loan repayment calculations. In addition, lease holders only pay taxes on their monthly payments and tax benefits are offered to self-employed, salespeople and some professionals.

How long do you intend to keep your vehicle?
Lease terms are shorter than most financing terms. Lease holders get to drive a new vehicle more often with lease periods typically ranging from 36 to 48 months. At the end of your lease period, you have the options to purchase the vehicle from your dealer at a reduced rate or upgrade to a newer model under a different contract.

What kind of vehicle would you like to drive?
Monthly payments for lease holders are typically lower than those who finance. This means that drivers have the option of choosing a more luxurious vehicle for a lower monthly payment.

What is the length of my commuting time?
There will typically be a kilometre limit during the period of the lease contract. Potential lease holders should take an honest look at their driving habits and consider if the limit is realistic given their driving habits to avoid additional charges based on kilometres in excess of the limit.

Is maintenance included?
You should always speak with your local dealer about maintenance before signing your contract. NEWS CANADA

Nissan asks the ancient, baffling question: What do women want?

Nissan used input from female drivers to help them build the new Pathfinder. JIL MCINTOSH

Pathfinder. Automotive giant's employees changed their research methods by immersing themselves in the lives of everyday ladies

JIL MCINTOSH
Drive@metronews.ca

Back in 1955, Dodge introduced a new model called the La Femme. Aimed at women, it was painted in pastel colours, and included a matching raincoat and umbrella.

It failed, proving that it takes more than just a few "feminine touches" to appeal to female buyers. But while automakers generally know what won't work, it's an ongoing challenge to determine what does.

"I think women are misunderstood, and it's because the industry assumes they're disinterested in cars, and find them boring and one-dimensional," says Rachel Nguyen, director of exploratory and advanced product planning for Nissan's head office in Los Angeles. "Instead, they see it in their lives, and if they will enjoy being in it.

Extra facts

- **10 per cent.** In its research, Nissan found that only 10 per cent of women would consider buying a pink car.
- **Tempting technology.** Many automakers are using infotainment systems that integrate the driver's smartphone and its apps, for ease of use and familiarity.

"When women walk into a dealership, they don't say, 'Wow, look at that new grille, it's so great compared to the last generation.' They look at the whole thing, and it's more than just the product."

A lot of people are involved in the process. Nguyen works with teams of designers, engineers and planners to identify major trends and customer needs, and also with consumers.

While discussion groups are important, the company also uses immersion research that can include going into people's homes. "We're looking for insights," she says. "It's not typical market research. Immersing in these women's lives is where we gain our insight and tells us what we need to do."

This research has led Nissan to incorporate such things as lighting and materials to improve the vehicle cabin's appearance, along with practicality. On three-row SUVs, the second-row seat slides forward in such a way that if it has a car seat on it, it's still easy to get into the third row. "We said, let's finally get it right where I don't have to move my kid out of the car seat to get my other kid into the back seat," Nguyen says. "We put our foot down, and put a push on engineering for that."

Women also want technology as much as men do, but it needs to be intuitive and easy to use. The company is continually working on designs that take the enormous amount of information available, and present it in formats that are accessible, affordable, and also minimize distraction.

Nguyen actually studied the La Femme's history, which led her to realize that while men and women can have differences in taste, a functional, well-designed vehicle works for everyone. "It's the kiss of death to say that you're designing for women," she says. "If you meet their needs, you will capture the needs of everyone."

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Outlook appealing mostly for its size

Second gear.
2007-2009
Saturn Outlook

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
drive@metronews.ca

Saturn's big family hauler hit the road for 2007, just a few years before the demise of the GM-owned brand. Packing seating for up to 8 and riding the same platform as the Chevrolet Traverse and GMC Acadia, Outlook packed a standard V6, plenty of size, and a long list of available feature content. Look for split-folding and sliding seats, as well as generous at-hand storage dotted throughout the cabin. Feature content included available heated leather, OnStar, a sunroof, navigation, automatic climate control and plenty more.

PHOTO: BRIAN MOORE

Common issues

Check for wetness in the front passenger footwell areas or on the ceiling liner, which could indicate a leaky sunroof. Listen for any unwelcomed noises from under the hood, noting any that escalate when you're steering. This could indicate a power steering pump that's planning to act up. Put your ears on the lookout for any clunking or popping sounds from the suspension as you travel over bumps, which could indicate a worn-out component. Have a mechanic inspect the underside for signs of fluid leakage from the shock absorbers, transmission, engine and AWD system, and to be sure the CV axle boots are in good shape. Shuddering during acceleration, or a lumpy, sporadic feeling to the Outlook's power delivery, possibly accompanied by a 'check engine' light, could be evidence of a faulty ignition coil, too.

What owners like

Owners report satisfaction with the ride and handling balance, V6 performance, easy-to-drive character, generous towing rating, interior design and overall space and comfort. Easy-to-operate folding seats are also noted.

What owners dislike

Noisy factory tires and some cheap interior trim are among the biggest complaints. Some owners, additionally, wish for more responsiveness form the transmission, which strongly resists downshifting to save fuel.

Engine

Look for an automatic transmission and 3.6 litre V6 engine with around 265 horsepower on all models. Outlook packed a lengthy powertrain warranty, which is still being honored dealerships despite the discontinuation of the Saturn brand. All Wheel Drive (AWD) was available.

The verdict

Largely, it's the size, capability and warranty coverage that make the Outlook look appealing as a used SUV buy. If you're dead-set on one, be sure to seek out a clean mechanical bill of health and opt for any extended warranty coverage that may be available.

Mustang getting better with age

Then and now. With the impressive 2015 version of the 'All American' icon just unveiled it seemed appropriate to see how far the model has come

AUTO PILOT
Mike Goetz
drive@metronews.ca

The 2015 Mustang really does please the eye. BOTH PHOTOS FORD

The all-new 2.3-litre EcoBoost engine.

The Ford Mustang is an iconic American consumer product, not unlike the Fender Telecaster guitar, Campbell's Soup, or the Colt 45 handgun (or if you prefer, Colt 45 malt liquor).

Mustang's all-new and sixth-generation version, the 2015 model, was just revealed last week, in a simultaneous six-city debut extravaganza.

The world has changed a lot since 1964, when the Mustang first debuted, but the original and archetypical "Pony Car" is still relevant and is still lusted after. Let's take a quick "then and now" look, to appreciate the transformation of this American icon ...

Target audience

Back then, the Mustang was targeted successfully at young people. Today, the average age of Mustang buyers is over 50. Back then, and right up until the 2014 model, the Mustang was only sold officially in North America. Ford says it will sell the 2015 model globally. As the most iconic, visible, and all-American-styled vehicle in its portfolio, it will help Ford announce its intentions in new markets as it works to raise its global presence.

Sales targets

Back then, Mustang was a big-volume player, by any standard. In 1966, almost 450,000 units were sold in North America. Now, with annual North American sales at about 85,000, it's no longer a mainstream product. But Ford really wants Mustang to outsell Camaro, something it doesn't do now in the U.S. Curiously, Mustang easily outsells Camaro in Canada.

Styling

Back then, Mustang styling was somewhat revolutionary. Now it's retro-inspired with modern design elements. Ford hopes the new look will appeal to more younger buyers, and to those international buyers. But the styling vibe remains very much "All American."

Technology

Back then, with a focus on younger, less-affluent buyers, Mustang was purposely devoid of lots of expensive technology (except for the obvious and many performance editions). Even up to the latest model, Mustang was famous for retaining an old-world "solid rear axle" suspension. The 2015 model is the first with a fully independent rear suspension. It's also the first in decades to feature a four-cylinder engine option — the all-new 2.3-litre EcoBoost, good for 305 horses and 300 "torques." Those moves, and others, like more use of weight-saving aluminum and the new electronic launch control (a first for Ford), are all about making a better Mustang, and a nod to convincing foreign buyers that Mustang is no longer just an American sports car lump, as in, only fast in a straight line, and too big to be agile. But you really have to like how Ford retained the "analogue" nature of the Mustang. The cabin features lots of analogue-looking instruments and actual mechanical switches that should make actual mechanical noises when you use them.

Price

Back then, Mustang was cheap and cheerful. Ford hasn't released prices yet, but you just know it has too much technology, too much safety and performance, and too many modern accoutrements to ever be that cheap again. But what are you going to do? Go back to 1964?

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
If you have not made as much progress as you would have liked on a project, don't worry and certainly don't work even harder. Maybe in future you should set yourself targets you know you will be able to reach.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
If you need to get something finished, step on the gas. Mars in the work area of your chart will boost your energy but you won't get anywhere worth going unless you're motivated.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If someone asks for your opinion on a personal matter, you will be happy to give it. However, if your sixth sense tells you they won't be happy hearing the truth, maybe you should decline their request.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Feuds and power struggles are best avoided, even if it means you have to go off and be by yourself for a while. Do not, under any circumstances, make the mistake of taking sides.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You need to get your financial house in order — quickly. Be ruthless with yourself and make sure you know the difference between your needs and your desires. If something is not a necessity, live without it.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Your authority on the work front has slipped a bit and you need to find ways to remind people why they should do what you tell them. Be persuasive but don't be rude.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
According to the planets this is a good day for personal issues, especially partnerships. In affairs of the heart, you can hardly put a foot wrong at the moment — and a little of what you enjoy will do you good.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You may not be able to rely on certain people as much as you have done recently, but you no longer need them. There is a major luck factor working in your life at the moment.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Make the most of the Sun in your sign to show the world what you are capable of. It's never too late to make an impression or to move up in the world but now it will be easier than other times.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You may not have made as much progress at work as your talents deserve. But, with Mars moving through the career area of your chart, it won't be long before that changes.

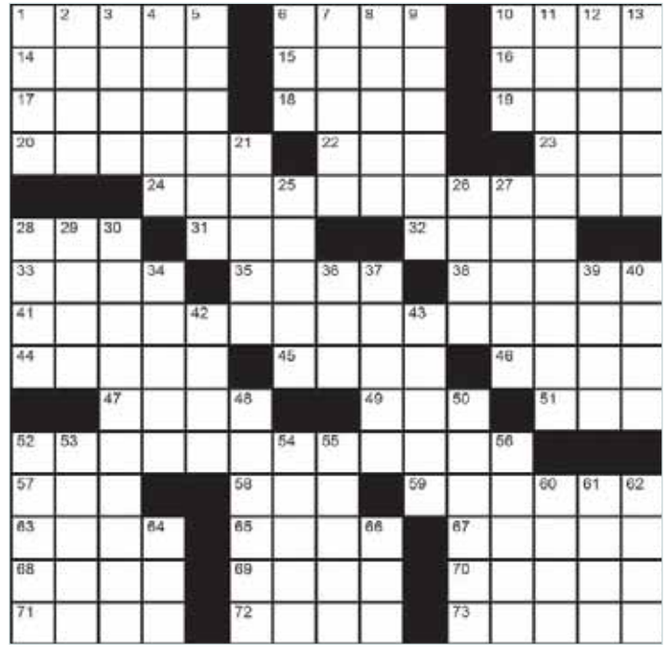
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Today, make an effort to read between the lines. What is not being said is likely to be ten times more important than what is being said. Also, watch other people's body language.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Be decisive today. Think and act fast and don't worry too much about what the consequences might be. Some people may get annoyed but they need to know you're not the sort to be messed around. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

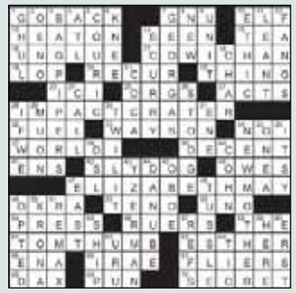
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Fido's warning
6. Color Me __ ('90s boy band)
10. Went too fast
14. Mr. Spock's virtue
15. Wise one
16. Taken-back vehicle
17. Flooded
18. High-hatter
19. Pouches
20. Canada Goose garments
22. As well
23. British running great Sebastian
24. Items worn by Queen Victoria at The Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto: 2 wds.
28. With it
31. New Zealand bird
32. Blinds strip
33. Mr. Redding
35. Fashionably 'ready'
38. Clear
41. John Lennon's handwritten lyrics, etc.: 2 wds.
44. __ socks
45. Hydrocarbon suffixes
46. Hershey's treat
47. Glorify
49. Energy
51. Sketch show, shortly
52. Mount Everest professionals: 2 wds.
57. __ Mahal
58. Li'l loudness
59. Arrogance
63. Songstress Ms. Ali
65. Go __ detail
67. Poppycock
68. Roman emperor
69. Poet Mr. Pound
70. Fragrant oil from flowers
71. Likewise
72. Marinate
73. Antelope variety

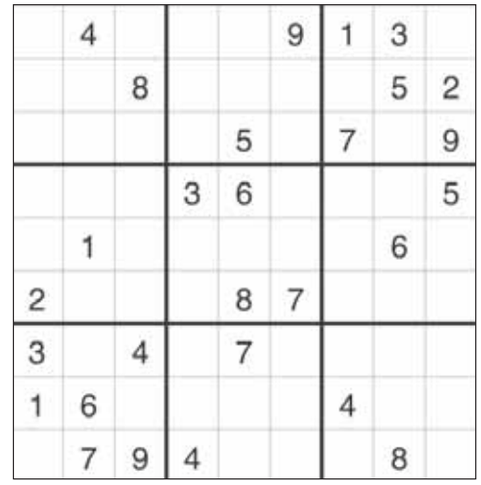
Down
1. "__ Shot" (1977)
2. "And __ _ word from our sponsor..."
3. Seaweed product
4. Hazards
5. "To life!" in "Fiddler on the Roof" (1971)
6. Microsoft mogul ...his initials-sharers
7. Some relatives
8. Cake-lover's spotting-cake reaction
9. Claude __, Montreal-born singer/songwriter
10. Grads-to-be, briefly
11. They might be held to negotiate a treaty: 2 wds.
12. Edmonton high-rise office building, __ Tower
13. Prescription amounts
21. Alpine sight
25. "Instant __!" by John Lennon
26. Non-royal
27. Eiffel Tower's home
28. Lively circle dance
29. "Lay __ __ the Line" by Triumph
30. Food preserving containers: 2 wds.
34. Broadway composer, Matthew __
36. Long time
37. Spectacular coin-collecting fountain in Rome
39. Priory of __, in "The Da Vinci Code"
40. "My Name Is __"
42. "You Raise __" by Josh Groban: 2 wds.
43. Thespian's line to the audience
48. Canadian writer, Robertson __ (b.1913 - d.1995)
50. Canadian actress Ms. Ory
52. Ms. Katic of "Castle" on ABC
53. Ms. McCallion, Mayor of Mississauga, ON since 1978
54. Nickname of Gregory Harrison's character on "Trapper John, M.D."
55. Extreme
56. Chimney's characteristic
60. Smidgen
61. Ice floes animal
62. "__ Breckinridge" (1970)
64. Cow's communication
66. Furniture wood

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



Yesterday's Sudoku

8	2	4	7	6	3	5	1	9
1	3	5	2	9	4	6	7	8
6	9	7	5	8	1	3	2	4
2	7	1	3	5	8	4	9	6
9	5	3	6	4	7	1	8	2
4	8	6	9	1	2	7	3	5
3	1	8	4	2	6	9	5	7
7	6	9	8	3	5	2	4	1
5	4	2	1	7	9	8	6	3

Today
-5°/-10°
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40%

Thursday
-7°/-9°
Variable

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Xmas Glasgow $929 Roundtrip Dep Dec 18 | Ret Jan 9 INCLUDES ALL TAXES & FEES

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